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ABSTRACT

This handbook provides current regional accreditation eligibility requirements and accreditation standards for community, junior, and specialized two-year colleges. It is intended for the use of institutions under review, members of evaluation teams, and others that are concerned with good practice in associate degree-granting institutions. Institutional accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is a voluntary, nongovernmental process involving institutional self-study and professional peer review. Standards for accreditation represent generally accepted definitions of good practice in education. The ten standards utilized are: institutional mission, institutional integrity, institutional effectiveness, educational programs, student support and development, information and learning resources, faculty and staff, physical resources, financial resources, and governance and administration. Each standard includes an overall goal statement, as well as a series of specific objectives. For example, in the area of curriculum and instruction, the institution needs to have clearly defined processes for establishing and evaluating all of its educational programs. The institution should also define and publish for each program the program's educational objectives for students. This report also provides guidelines indicating Commission expectation for colleges preparing for an eligibility review. For educational objectives, documentation such as catalog statements, which establish educational objectives for programs, outcomes data from educational program reviews and or graduation history, can be used for eligibility applications. (JA)

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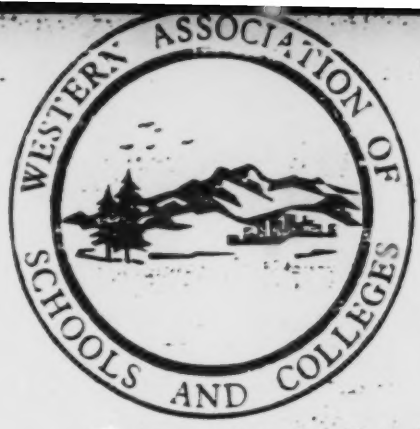

Accrediting Commission For Community & Junior Colleges

Handbook Of Accreditation And Policy Manual

1996 Edition

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HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION AND POLICY MANUAL

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1996

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Standards of Accreditation and Commission Handbook are refined over time and informed by the experience of hundreds of professionals who volunteer their time, their labors, and their wisdom to the work of the Commission. Institutional trustees, presidents, administrators, faculty members, staff, and students contribute their perspective through participation on evaluation teams, working on institutional self studies, serving on Commission Task Groups, and reviewing Commission papers.

A series of Task Groups organized around each of the major standards, augmented by special working groups drawn from the private institutions and from the institutional research community, provided advice throughout the development period. In addition, presentations at conferences, workshops with system and institutional representatives, and discussions with Accreditation Liaison Officers provided more comment. Organizations and associations were invited to provide comment, and they responded with valuable suggestions.

The development of this Handbook was further enhanced by the work of a national committee of regional accreditation Associate Directors. This committee reviewed all current regional accreditation eligibility requirements and threshold accreditation standards. The Commission adopted and incorporated much of the work of this group into the 1996 Standards of Accreditation.

The Commission Editorial Board, chaired first by Robert D. Jensen and then by Constance M. Carroll, coordinated the development of the 1996 Standards of Accreditation. Members of that Board were Commissioners Barbara Beno, Carmen Maldonado Decker, J. Robert Evans, Celina Sau Lin Ing, and Bruce Smith. Commission Consultant Frances Conn was a constant source of substantive insight and editorial refinement. Associate Director Judith Watkins served as overall project coordinator and editor of the Handbook. Sue Lundquist and Mary Ann Hilmes prepared and proofread the material for publication.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1996 EDITION

This handbook is intended for members of the community of community, junior, and specialized two-year colleges. It is for the use of institutions under review, members of evaluation teams, and others who are concerned with good practice in associate degree-granting institutions.

Institutional accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is a voluntary, nongovernmental process involving institutional self study and professional peer review. Standards for accreditation represent generally-accepted definitions of good practice in education. Policies, procedures, and standards have been adopted and published by ACCJC after development by representatives of accredited institutions and review by accreditation liaison officers and institutional leaders.

New editions are published periodically as the Commission conducts systematic reviews of its standards, policies, and practices. Comments and suggestions should be submitted to the ACCJC Executive Director or any member of the Commission. Standards are under continuous review by ACCJC member institutions and the Commission.

This document is to be used in conjunction with companion volumes. The Guide to Institutional Self Study and Reports to the Commission is a reference book which includes instructions for completion and submission of reports to the Commission. The Handbook for Evaluators assists visiting teams in conducting on-site evaluations and preparing evaluation reports to the Commission. The Eligibility Brochure: Requirements for Accreditation spells out the core characteristics of an accreditable institution and the Commission's expectations of institutions to be considered for membership.

The Commission is recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA), a nongovernmental agency that recognizes postsecondary accrediting bodies in the United States, and by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)* is one of the six regional accrediting associations covering the United States whose purpose is continual improvement of education and cooperation among educational institutions and agencies. WASC was formed on July 1, 1962 to evaluate and accredit schools, colleges, and universities in California, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. WASC functions through a Board of Directors and three accrediting Commissions: the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Accrediting Commission for Schools. The Board of Directors consists of nine members, each accrediting Commission electing three members.

Each Commission, with the involvement of all participating institutions, develops its own standards, procedures, and fiscal policies under the authority and subject to the approval of the WASC Board of Directors. The accreditation actions of each Commission are certified by the Board of Directors of WASC. Accreditation ceases whenever an institution requests in writing that its accreditation be terminated, when the Commission formally acts to terminate accreditation, or when an institution fails to pay its annual fees.

Purposes of Accreditation

Voluntary nongovernmental institutional accreditation, as practiced by the Commission and the other regional commissions, is a unique characteristic of American education. No institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation; however, because of the recognized benefits, most of the eligible institutions in this and other regions have sought to become accredited. In many other countries the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function.

While the Commission works to establish minimum standards of quality for institutions, its primary focus is to foster educational excellence. Each institution has the responsibility of defining characteristics of quality and excellence for itself and

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*For the WASC Constitution and list of candidate and accredited institutions, see the annual WASC Directory, which is available from each Commission office or from WASC, 533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200, Burlingame, CA 94010. For a list of regional accrediting associations and related bodies see pages 121-22.

presenting evidence that such quality and excellence is being achieved. The Commission tries to deal with institutional differences in ways that protect both general standards of excellence and individualized educational philosophy and practice.

Where an institution provides programs not commonly offered by accredited institutions of higher education in the United States, the institution bears the burden of demonstrating that the subject matter offered is appropriate to higher education, is academic in quality and rigor, and can be reviewed by peers from accredited institutions.

The Commission accredits institutions, not individual programs. Therefore, in addition to assessing academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness, the Commission emphasizes structures, processes, and resources.

In order to assist institutions in determining their educational effectiveness, the Commission has recognized five major purposes of accreditation:

1. To assure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to postsecondary education, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially, is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so, and meets Commission standards.

2. To encourage institutional development and improvement through self study and periodic evaluation by qualified peer professionals.

3. To develop and use standards to assess and enhance educational quality and institutional performance, and to validate these standards by ongoing research.

4. To promote interchange of ideas among public and independent institutions through peer review.

5. To protect institutions against encroachments which might jeopardize their educational effectiveness or academic freedom.

<u>Standards and Policies</u>

Accreditation is a continuing process, the heart of which lies in periodic self-appraisal by each institution. In its initial application for candidacy or accreditation, and in preparation for each subsequent visit, every institution prepares an extensive report with primary emphasis on self-analysis and evaluation. Between scheduled visits,

each institution addresses visiting team recommendations and submits Annual Reports.

As a result of extensive experience and research, the Commission has determined that there are certain basic characteristics of quality required of all institutions of higher education. These Commission standards, policies, and procedures are periodically reviewed and revised. Revisions are made as needed, based on research, the experience of the Commission and visiting teams, and comments of institutional representatives.

The College-Commission Relationship

In carrying out its functions, the Commission has established a "Code of Good Practice," both for its relations with the institutions it serves and with regard to its internal organization and procedures. The full text of this policy is to be found on pages 92-94.

Every institution seeking recognition by the Commission is expected to abide by the standards and policies of the Commission as stated in this Handbook and as may be developed in the future. As knowledge increases and the needs of society change, institutions are continually evolving in order to serve their students and community better. Consequently, the Commission continually reviews the role and validity of its standards and engages in widespread consultation with the accredited institutions in the region in order to incorporate their suggestions and receive their approval. The Commission conducts research to assess the validity, reliability, and usefulness of its standards and procedures as aids to institutional improvement.

The effectiveness of self-regulatory accreditation, however, depends upon the institution's acceptance of specific responsibilities, including complying with all of the standards and abiding by the Commission's policies, procedures, and decisions. There must be institutional commitment to, and involvement in, the accreditation process. The process assumes that each institution has the responsibility to accept an honest and forthright assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, a comprehensive self study report and peer evaluation are required. Only in this way will the validity and vitality of the accreditation process be ensured.

In its relations with the institutions it serves, the Commission is committed to:

1. Appraise institutions in terms of their own stated purposes within the context of Commission standards and interpret standards in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity.

2. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self study, including systematic assessment of institutional effectiveness.

3. Assist and stimulate improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.

4. Conduct evaluation visits by experienced and qualified peers under conditions which, insofar as reasonably possible, ensure impartial and objective judgment, avoiding conflict of interest.

5. Include on evaluation teams representation from other institutions of similar purpose and academic programs.

6. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for possible conflict of interest.

7. Require each evaluation team chair to arrange consultation during the visit with administration, faculty, students, and trustees and to include during comprehensive visits a publicized opportunity for an open hearing.

8. Provide opportunity for the institution to respond in writing to the team report before it is completed and to appear before the Commission when the report is considered.

9. Provide opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend portions of Commission meetings devoted to policies and other nonconfidential matters. See policy on "Public Access," page 90.

10. Encourage widespread discussion and serious consideration of major team recommendations.

11. Request a written response from an institution or refer a matter to the next evaluation team when the Commission's attention is drawn to the possibility that an institution may be in violation of Commission standards or policies. A special interim visit focused on specified concerns may be scheduled by the Commission.

12. Make an initial visit for candidacy or accreditation to an institution only on the written request of the chief executive officer of the institution.

13. Revisit an institution consistent with Commission policies and periodic evaluation procedures following due notice to the institution.

14. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial candidacy or initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action by the Commission.

15. Revoke accreditation or candidacy only after advanced written notice.

16. Encourage continuing communication between the Commission and institutions through the liaison officer position in each institution. See policy on Accreditation Liaison Officer.

Accredited Status

The status of accreditation indicates that an institution has met Commission standards.

In meeting these standards the institution has:

1. Completed a period of intensive and comprehensive self study followed by an on-site evaluation of institutional performance demonstrating that it meets Commission standards.

2. Demonstrated that it operates at a satisfactory level of quality in its educational programs consistent with its stated purposes and consistent with Commission standards.

3. Demonstrated the availability of sufficient resources to support existing and planned activities at a satisfactory level of quality and offered reasonable grounds for belief that there will continue to be adequate resources in the future.

4. Committed itself to institutional improvement, periodic self-evaluation, and continuing compliance with all Commission standards, policies, procedures, and decisions.

Periodic Review

Accreditation is attained by the process of evaluation of an entire institution and continues until formally withdrawn. It is subject, however, to periodic review and to conditions as determined by the Commission. Every accredited institution files an Annual Report and undergoes a comprehensive self study and evaluation at least every six years. A Midterm Report describing progress in responding to team recommendations is submitted in the third year following the evaluation visit. The Commission may request special Interim Reports and visits to assure progress in addressing specified issues of concern.

If an institution undergoes significant change or if its educational effectiveness is questioned, the Commission reserves the right to review that institution's accreditation without regard to any previously indicated time pattern.

As a voluntary, nongovernmental agency, the Commission is not obligated to exercise the regulatory control of state and federal governments or to apply their mandates regarding collective bargaining, affirmative action, health and safety regulations, and the like. Furthermore, the Commission does not enforce the standards of specialized accrediting agencies or other nongovernmental organizations, or the laws and regulations of state agencies, although institutions may wish to review the publications of other such agencies as part of the self study process. The Commission has its own standards and expects that institutions and teams will apply them with integrity, imagination, and an attitude of humane concern for students and the public interest.

When an institution is granted accreditation, the following shall appear in all appropriate publications:

> (Name of institution) is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

Candidate Status

Candidate for Accreditation status offers both new and established institutions the opportunity to establish a publicly recognized relationship with a regional accrediting agency. It is a pre-accreditation status, initially awarded for two years. Candidacy indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation. Candidacy is a period in which the institution undertakes the necessary steps to reach demonstrable compliance with Commission standards. Candidate status may not exceed four years.

An institution granted candidacy must use the following statement if it wishes to describe that status publicly:

> (Name of institution) is a candidate for accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.
>
> Candidate for Accreditation is a status of preliminary affiliation with the Commission initially awarded for two years. The Commission may renew candidate status for an additional two years, grant initial accreditation following institutional self study and on-site evaluation visit, or terminate candidacy. Candidacy may not exceed four years. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not assure eventual accreditation.

Review and Appeal

Institutions whose applications for candidacy, renewal of candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation are denied, or whose candidacy or accreditation is terminated by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, may request a review of the Commission's decision. Such a review must be requested prior to a filing of an appeal by the institution to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The policies and procedures which govern the conduct of the Commission's review are found in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Constitution (pages 124-132).

An institution which, after availing itself of the review procedure of the Commission, still believes itself aggrieved by the Commission's denial or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, may appeal such action within thirty days of receipt of notice thereof to the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The WASC President shall arrange a hearing for representatives of the institution before the Association's Hearing Board, established for this purpose, as prescribed in Article VI of the Constitution of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (pages 128-131).

Alteration of Evaluation Schedule

An institution may petition the Accrediting Commission for alteration of its evaluation schedule. A written request submitted to the Executive Director will be considered by the Commission if the request is based on:

1. A plan to coordinate evaluation of institutions in a system.

2. Disaster, such as fire, flood, or earthquake that impedes the normal conduct of institutional business for an extended period of time.

3. Severe and unusual circumstances that unavoidably disrupt the self study process or scheduled team visit.

4. Substantive changes in the mission or status of the institution.

ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCREDITATION

Eligible institutions offering one or more programs of two academic years leading to the Associate Degree, located in the states of Hawaii and California, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may apply to the Commission for candidacy.

Prior to making a formal application, an institution wishing to become a Candidate for Accreditation must begin by assessing itself in relation to the basic criteria for institutional eligibility, stated below. The standards of accreditation and Commission policies should also be reviewed, as they will provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of institutional performance and quality and give further definition to the eligibility criteria. The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self study so that only institutions which meet the basic criteria for eligibility may proceed.

The Commission uses the same self study and site visit process for both candidacy and accreditation applications. The results of a candidacy or initial accreditation visit could be denial, candidacy, or accreditation. Clearly, the history of the applicant institution will have great bearing on the Commission's decision.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

(Adopted June 1995; Revised January 1996)

Compliance with the requirements is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every institutional self study and comprehensive evaluation. Institutions are expected to include in their self study reports information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

AUTHORITY

1. The institution is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

   In California, 94310.3A (or subsequent statute) approval by the California Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education is required for private institutions. The institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

MISSION

2. The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve.

GOVERNING BOARD

3. The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

   The governing board is an independent policy-making body, capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, or personal financial interest in the institution.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

4. The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose primary responsibility is to the institution.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

5. The institution has sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

OPERATIONAL STATUS

6. The institution is operational with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

DEGREES

7. A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

8. The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

ACADEMIC CREDIT

9. The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements should provide appropriate information regarding the award of academic credit.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

10. The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's educational objectives for students.

GENERAL EDUCATION

11. The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of

knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component should include demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. Degree credit for general education programs should be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education.

FACULTY

12. The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution and sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must exist.

STUDENT SERVICES

13. The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services and development programs consistent with student characteristics and its institutional mission.

ADMISSIONS

14. The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

15. The institution owns or otherwise provides specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and all of its educational programs.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

16. The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support its mission and educational programs and to assure financial stability.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

17. The institution regularly undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit a copy of the current budget and a copy of the current audited financial statement prepared by an outside certified public accountant who has no other relationship to the institution. The audit must be

certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide Audits of Colleges and Universities, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

18. The institution provides evidence of basic planning for the development of the institution, planning which identifies and integrates plans for academic personnel, learning resources, facilities, and financial development, as well as procedures for program review and institutional improvement.

    The institution engages in systematically evaluating how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning and documentation of institutional effectiveness.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

19. The institution publishes in its catalog or other appropriate places accurate and current information that describes its purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degrees offered and the degree requirements, costs and refund policies, grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to attending the institution and withdrawing from it.

RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

20. The governing board provides assurance that the institution adheres to the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

DOCUMENTATION FOR ELIGIBILITY APPLICATIONS

The Commission recognizes that not every institution begins the process of affiliation from the same place. A public institution which has existed as a branch or center of an established college will be very different from a new private college, and both will be different from an established specialized institution. The documents listed below are intended to be guidelines indicating Commission expectations for colleges preparing for an Eligibility Review. It is in the college's best interest to provide as much relevant information as possible to assist staff review and the Commission decision-making process.

1. AUTHORITY

   - Degree-granting approval statement or certificate from appropriate body.
   - Articles of incorporation (private institutions).

2. MISSION

   - Copy of mission statement as it appears in a published catalog or other public document.
   - Minutes of governing board meeting where mission statement was adopted.

3. GOVERNING BOARD

   - Biographical information on the governing board members.
   - Copy of governing board by-laws and statement of board responsibilities.
   - Certification that the board does not have a majority of persons with employment, family, or personal interest in the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board chair (private institutions).

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

   - Name, address, and biographical information on chief executive officer.
   - Certification of CEO's primary responsibility to the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board chair.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

   - Table of organization, including names of those in positions.
   - Names and biographical information on administrative staff.

6. OPERATIONAL STATUS

- Enrollment history of the institution.
- Enrollments in institutional degree programs by year or cohort, including degrees awarded.
- Current schedule of classes.

7. DEGREES

- List of degrees, course credit requirements, and length of study for each degree program, including documentation of at least one degree program of two academic years.
- Catalog designation of college-level courses for which degree credit is granted.

8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Names of degrees which reflect the mission of the institution.
- Documentation from catalog or other public document which describes the courses, units, and curricular sequence of the educational programs.

9. ACADEMIC CREDIT

- Institutional policies on transfer and award of credit.
- Formulae used by the institution to calculate values of academic credit.

10. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Catalog statements which establish educational objectives for programs.
- Outcomes data from educational program reviews.
- Graduation history.

11. GENERAL EDUCATION

- List of general education courses, including catalog descriptions.
- Course outlines for language and quantitative reasoning courses.
- Documentation of higher education rigor and quality.

12. FACULTY

- Full-time and part-time faculty roster, including degrees and experience.
- Faculty responsibilities statement.
- Current schedule of classes identifying faculty responsible for each class.

13. STUDENT SERVICES

- Demographic characteristics of students.
- List of student services provided which reflects the mission of the institution.

14. ADMISSIONS

- Copy of admissions policy from a published statement.
- Copy of enrollment application.
- Statement of student qualifications for admission.

15. INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- Profile of holdings and resources.
- Copies of agreements for access to external resources.

16. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Past, current, and proposed budgets and financial statements.
- Documentation of any external foundation or other funding support.
- Student loan default rates and relevant USDE reports, if a participant.
- Documentation of funding base.

17. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- Past, current, and proposed budgets.
- Financial aid program reviews/audits, if a participant.
- Certified independent audit, including management letter.

18. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

- Most recent educational, fiscal, and facilities plans.
- Most recent institutional evaluations of student assessment and outcomes systems.

19. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

- Catalog or other public document which serves that purpose.
- Recent print or other media advertisements.
- Policies regarding public disclosure.

20. RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

- Copy of policy adopted and published by the governing board assuring compliance with this criterion.

- List of other accreditation held by the institution.
- Copy of directory pages which describe the institution's representation by those accrediting bodies.

PART II

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The standards describe good practice in community and junior college education. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has established its standards based on experience, research, and extensive consultation with member institutions. Commission standards and policies are periodically reviewed and revised. Revisions are made as needed and are based on research, the experience of the Commission and visiting teams, and comments of institutional representatives.

The Commission articulated five assumptions which undergird the standards. We encourage institutions to remember these overarching goals as they interpret and use the standards in light of individual mission and circumstance.

1. The diversity of the whole range of institutions included in the region must be respected and accommodated, recognizing that good practice may be manifest in a wide range of practices and settings.

2. The standards focus on outcomes and accomplishments, embracing a model of accreditation which requires assessment of resources, processes, and outcomes at the institutional level.

3. The standards are statements of good practice in higher education and avoid language of compliance which might be linked to one system or set of statutes or regulations within the region.

4. The standards strive toward economy and clarity and avoid redundancy and ambiguity.

5. The standards recognize that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is itself a part of a larger accrediting community which includes the other commissions in the region, other regional institutional accreditors, and governmental and non-governmental agencies.

The accreditation standards cover ten areas, each of which is designated as a major standard. The scope of each standard is described in a headnote. It is followed by numbered and lettered subsections which provide further definition to the standard. These numbered subsections identify major components of the standard, but they are not designed to cover every facet of the standard. Institutions are expected to address each of the components set forth, and they are encouraged to include

additional components if doing so would provide greater depth or more particular applicability to the individual institution.

In preparing its self study, an institution is expected to present appropriate documentation to support its description and analysis of programs and services and evidence that it meets or exceeds the requirements for accreditation.

The Guide to Self Study provides complete discussion of the Commission's expectations concerning evidence and documentation to be presented. It contains information, suggestions, and examples useful in conducting the institutional self study and preparing the accreditation report.

STANDARD ONE: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution, its educational purposes, its students, and its place in the higher education community.

1. The institution has a statement of mission, adopted by the governing board, which identifies the broad-based educational purposes it seeks to achieve.

2. The mission statement defines the students the institution intends to serve as well as the parameters under which programs can be offered and resources allocated.

3. Institutional planning and decision making are guided by the mission statement.

4. The institution evaluates and revises its mission statement on a regular basis.

STANDARD TWO: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates honesty and truthfulness in representations to its constituencies and the public; in pursuit of truth and the dissemination of knowledge; in its treatment of and respect for administration, faculty, staff, and students; in the management of its affairs and in relationships with its accreditation association and other external agencies.

1. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to its constituencies, the public, and prospective students through its catalogues, publications, and statements, including those presented in electronic formats. Precise, accurate; and current information is provided in the catalog concerning (a) educational purposes; (b) degrees, curricular offerings, educational resources, and course offerings; (c) student fees and other financial obligations, student financial aid, and fee refund policies; (d) requirements for admission and for achievement of degrees, including the academic calendar and information regarding program length; and (e) the names of administrators, faculty, and governing board.

2. The institution has a readily available governing board-adopted policy protecting academic freedom and responsibility which states the institutional commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and fosters the integrity of the teaching-learning process.

3. Faculty and other college staff distinguish between personal conviction and proven conclusions and present relevant data fairly and objectively to students and others.

4. Institutions which strive to instill specific beliefs or world views, or to require codes of conduct of faculty, administrative and support staff, or students, give clear prior notice of such policies.

5. The institution provides faculty and students with clear expectations concerning the principles of academic honesty and the sanctions for violation.

6. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.

7. The institution demonstrates honesty and integrity in its athletic programs.

8. The institution demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with the Commission and agrees to comply with Commission standards, policies, guidelines, public disclosure, and self study requirements.

9. The institution regularly evaluates and revises institutional policies, practices, and publications to ensure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

STANDARD THREE: INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution, appropriate to its mission and purposes as a higher education institution, develops and implements a broad-based and integrated system of research, evaluation, and planning to assess institutional effectiveness and uses the results for institutional improvement. The institution identifies institutional outcomes which can be validated by objective evidence.

A. Institutional Research and Evaluation

A.1 Institutional research is integrated with and supportive of institutional planning and evaluation.

A.2 The institution provides the necessary resources for effective research and evaluation.

A.3 The institution has developed and implemented the means for evaluating how well, and in what ways, it accomplishes its mission and purposes.

A.4 The institution provides evidence that its program evaluations lead to improvement of programs and services.

B. Institutional Planning

B.1 The institution defines and publishes its planning processes and involves appropriate segments of the college community in the development of institutional plans.

B.2 The institution defines and integrates its evaluation and planning processes to identify priorities for improvement.

B.3 The institution engages in systematic and integrated educational, financial, physical, and human resources planning and implements changes to improve programs and services.

C. Institutional Outcomes Assessment

C.1 The institution specifies intended institutional outcomes and has clear documentation of their achievement.

C.2 The institution uses information from its evaluation and planning activities to communicate matters of quality assurance to the public.

C.3 The institution systematically reviews and modifies, as appropriate, its institutional research efforts, evaluation processes, institutional plans, and planning processes to determine their ongoing utility for assessing institutional effectiveness.

STANDARD FOUR: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The institution offers collegiate-level programs in recognized fields of study that culminate in identified student competencies leading to degrees and certificates. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all educational activities offered in the name of the institution, regardless of where or how presented, or by whom taught.

A. General Provisions

A.1 The institution seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with its institutional mission and purposes and the demographics and economics of its community.

A.2 Programs and courses leading to degrees are offered in a manner which provides students the opportunity to complete the program as announced, within a reasonable time.

A.3 When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.

A.4 The institution provides sufficient human, financial, and physical (including technological) resources to support its educational programs and to facilitate achievement of the goals and objectives of those programs regardless of the service location or instructional delivery method.

A.5 The institution designs and maintains academic advising programs to meet student needs for information and advice and adequately informs and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.

B. Degree and Certificate Programs

B.1 The institution demonstrates that its degrees and programs, wherever and however offered, support the mission of the institution. Degree and certificate programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate length, breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and use of information and learning resources.

B.2 The institution identifies its degrees and certificates in ways which are consistent with the program content, degree objectives, and student mastery of knowledge and skills including, where appropriate, career preparation and competencies.

B.3 The institution identifies and makes public expected learning outcomes for its degree and certificate programs. Students completing programs demonstrate achievement of those stated learning outcomes.

B.4 All degree programs are designed to provide students a significant introduction to the broad areas of knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, and focused study in at least one area of inquiry or established interdisciplinary core.

B.5 Students completing degree programs demonstrate competence in the use of language and computation.

B.6 The institution documents the technical and professional competence of students completing its vocational and occupational programs.

C. General Education

C.1 The institution requires of all degree programs a component of general education that is published in clear and complete terms in its general catalog.

C.2 The general education component is based on a philosophy and rationale that are clearly stated. Criteria are provided by which the appropriateness of each course in the general education component is determined.

C.3 The general education program introduces the content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. The general education program provides the opportunity for students to develop the intellectual skills, information technology facility, affective and creative capabilities, social attitudes, and an appreciation for cultural diversity that will make them effective learners and citizens.

C.4 Students completing the institution's general program demonstrate competence in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and critical analysis/logical thinking.

D. Curriculum and Instruction

D.1 The institution has clearly defined processes for establishing and evaluating all of its educational programs. These processes recognize the central role of faculty in developing, implementing, and evaluating the educational programs. Program evaluations are integrated into overall institutional evaluation and planning and are conducted on a regular basis.

D.2 The institution ensures the quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of all of its courses and programs regardless of service location or instructional delivery method.

D.3 The evaluation of student learning and the award of credit are based upon clearly stated and published criteria. Credit awarded is consistent with student learning and is based upon generally accepted norms or equivalencies.

D.4 The institution has clearly stated transfer of credit policies. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the credits accepted, including those for general education, achieve educational

objectives comparable to its own courses. Where patterns of transfer between institutions are established, efforts are undertaken to formulate articulation agreements.

D.5 The institution utilizes a range of delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the needs of its students.

D.6 The institution provides evidence that all courses and programs — both credit and non-credit — whether conducted on or off-campus by traditional or non-traditional delivery systems, are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures. This provision applies to continuing and community education, contract and other special programs conducted in the name of the institution.

D.7 Institutions offering curricula through electronic delivery systems operate in conformity with applicable Commission policies and statements on "Principles of Good Practice in Distance Education."

D.8 Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with applicable Commission policies and guidelines.

STANDARD FIVE: STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The institution recruits and admits students appropriate to its programs. It identifies and serves the diverse needs of its students with educational programs and learning support services, and it fosters a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, and success.

1. The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission and appropriate to its programs and follows practices that are consistent with those policies.

2. The institution provides to all prospective and currently enrolled students current and accurate information about its programs, admissions policies and graduation requirements, social and academic policies, refund policies, student conduct standards, and complaint and grievance procedures.

3. The institution identifies the educational support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.

4. The institution involves students, as appropriate, in planning and evaluating student support and development services.

5. Admissions and assessment instruments and placement practices are designed to minimize test and other bias and are regularly evaluated to assure effectiveness.

6. The institution provides appropriate, comprehensive, reliable, and accessible services to its students regardless of service location or delivery method.

7. The institution, in keeping with its mission, creates and maintains a campus climate which serves and supports its diverse student population.

8. The institution supports a co-curricular environment that fosters intellectual, ethical, and personal development for all of its students and encourages personal and civic responsibility.

9. Student records are maintained permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained.

10. The institution systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy, and effectiveness of its student services and uses the results of the evaluation as a basis for improvement.

STANDARD SIX: INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Information and learning resources and services are sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currentness to support the institution's intellectual and cultural activities and programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered. The institution provides training so that information and learning resources may be used effectively and efficiently.

1. Information and learning resources, and any equipment needed to access the holdings of libraries, media centers, computer centers, databases and other repositories, are sufficient to support the courses, programs, and degrees wherever offered.

2. Appropriate educational equipment and materials are selected, acquired, organized, and maintained to help fulfill the institution's purposes and support the educational program. Institutional policies and procedures ensure faculty involvement.

3. Information and learning resources are readily accessible to students, faculty, and administrators.

4. The institution has professionally qualified staff to provide appropriate support to users of information and learning resources, including training in the effective application of information technology to student learning.

5. The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the effective maintenance, security, and improvement of its information and learning resources.

6. When the institution relies on other institutions or other sources for information and learning resources to support its educational programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate, easily accessible, and utilized.

7. The institution plans for and systematically evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of its learning and information resources and services and makes appropriate changes as necessary.

STANDARD SEVEN: FACULTY AND STAFF

The institution has sufficient qualified full-time and part-time faculty and staff to support its educational programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds by making positive efforts to foster such diversity.

A. Qualifications and Selection

A.1 The institution has sufficient faculty and staff who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to support its programs and services.

A.2 Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selecting all personnel are clearly stated, public, directly related to institutional objectives, and accurately reflect job responsibilities.

A.3 Criteria for selecting faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed, effective teaching, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution.

A.4 Degrees held by faculty and administrators are listed in the institution's primary catalog. All U.S. degrees are from institutions accredited by recognized accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

B. Evaluation

B.1 The evaluation of each category of staff is systematic and conducted at stated intervals. The follow-up of evaluations is formal and timely.

B.2 Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness and encourage improvement.

B.3 Criteria for evaluation of faculty include teaching effectiveness, scholarship, or other activities appropriate to the area of expertise, and participation in institutional service or other institutional responsibilities.

C. Staff Development

C.1 The institution provides appropriate opportunities to all categories of staff for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission.

C.2 Planning and evaluation of staff development programs include the participation of staff who participate in, or are affected by, the programs.

D. General Personnel Provisions

D.1 The institution has and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.

D.2 The institution regularly assesses and reports its achievement of its employment equity objectives, consistent with the institutional mission.

D.3 Personnel policies and procedures affecting all categories of staff are systematically developed, clear, equitably administered, and available for information and review.

D.4 The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Personnel records are private, accurate, complete, and permanent.

STANDARD EIGHT: PHYSICAL RESOURCES

The institution has sufficient and appropriate physical resources to support its purposes and goals.

1. The institution ensures that adequate physical resources are provided to support its educational programs and services wherever and however they are offered.

2. The management, maintenance, and operation of physical facilities ensure effective utilization and continuing quality necessary to support the programs and services of the institution.

3. Physical facilities at all site locations where courses, programs, and services are offered are constructed and maintained in accordance with the institution's obligation to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment.

4. Selection, maintenance, inventory and replacement of equipment are conducted systematically to support the educational programs and services of the institution.

5. Physical resource planning and evaluation support institutional goals and are linked to other institutional planning and evaluation efforts, including district or system planning and utilization where appropriate.

STANDARD NINE: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The institution has adequate financial resources to achieve, maintain, and enhance its programs and services. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of financial viability and institutional improvement. The institution manages its financial affairs with integrity, consistent with its educational objectives.

A. Financial Planning

A.1 Financial planning supports institutional goals and is linked to other institutional planning efforts.

A.2 Annual and long-range financial planning reflects realistic assessments of resource availability and expenditure requirements. In those institutions which set tuition rates, and which receive a majority of funding from student fees and tuition, charges are reasonable in light of the operating costs, services to be rendered, equipment, and learning resources to be supplied.

A.3 Annual and long-range capital plans support educational objectives and relate to the plan for physical facilities.

A.4 Institutional guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development are clearly defined and followed.

A.5 Administrators, faculty, and support staff have appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of financial plans and budgets.

B. Financial Management

B.1 The financial management system creates appropriate control mechanisms and provides dependable and timely information for sound financial decision-making.

B.2 Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support institutional programs and services. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive and timely.

B.3 The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, externally-funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments.

B.4 Auxiliary activities and fund raising efforts support the programs and services of the institution, are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, and are conducted with integrity.

B.5 Contractual agreements with external entities are governed by institutional policies and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.

B.6 Financial management is regularly evaluated, and the results are used to improve the financial management system.

C. Financial Stability

C.1 Future obligations are clearly identified and plans exist for payment.

C.2 The institution has policies for appropriate risk management.

C.3 Cash flow arrangements or reserves are sufficient to maintain stability.

C.4 The institution has a plan for responding to financial emergencies or unforeseen occurrences.

STANDARD TEN: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution has a governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution. The institution has an administrative staff of appropriate size to enable the institution to achieve its goals and is organized to provide appropriate administrative services. Governance structures and systems ensure appropriate roles for the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students and facilitate effective communication among the institution's constituencies.

A. Governing Board

A.1 The governing board is an independent policy-making board capable of reflecting the public interest in board activities and decisions. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.

A.2 The governing board ensures that the educational program is of high quality, is responsible for overseeing the financial health and integrity of the institution, and confirms that institutional practices are consistent with the board-approved institutional mission statement and policies.

A.3 The governing board establishes broad institutional policies and appropriately delegates responsibility to implement these policies. The governing board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.

A.4 In keeping with its mission, the governing board selects and evaluates the chief executive officer and confirms the appointment of other major academic and administrative officers.

A.5 The size, duties, responsibilities, ethical conduct requirements, structure and operating procedures, and processes for assessing the performance of the governing board are clearly defined and published in board policies or by-laws. The board acts in a manner consistent with them.

A.6 The governing board has a program for new member orientation and governing board development.

A.7 The board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.

B. Institutional Administration and Governance

B.1 The institutional chief executive officer provides effective leadership to define goals, develop plans, and establish priorities for the institution.

B.2 The institutional chief executive officer efficiently manages resources, implements priorities controlling budget and expenditures, and ensures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and board policies.

B.3 The institution is administratively organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. The administration provides effective and efficient leadership and management which makes possible an effective teaching and learning environment.

B.4 Administrative officers are qualified by training and experience to perform their responsibilities and are evaluated systematically and regularly. The duties and responsibilities of institutional administrators are clearly defined and published.

B.5 Administration has a substantive and clearly-defined role in institutional governance.

B.6 Faculty have a substantive and clearly-defined role in institutional governance, exercise a substantial voice in matters of educational program and faculty personnel, and other institutional polices which relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise.

B.7 Faculty have established an academic senate or other appropriate organization for providing input regarding institutional governance. In the case of private colleges, the institution has a formal process for providing input regarding institutional governance.

B.8 The institution has written policy which identifies appropriate institutional support for faculty participation in governance and delineates the participation of faculty on appropriate policy, planning, and special purpose bodies.

B.9 The institution clearly states and publicizes the role of staff in institutional governance.

B.10 The institution clearly states and publicizes the role of students in institutional governance.

C. <u>Multi-College Districts and/or Systems</u>

C.1 The district/system chief executive officer provides effective leadership to define goals, develop plans, and establish priorities for the institution.

C.2 The district/system chief executive officer efficiently manages resources, implements priorities controlling budget and expenditures, and ensures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and board policies.

C.3 The district/system has a statement which clearly delineates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system and those of the college.

C.4 The district/system provides effective services that support the mission and functions of the college.

C.5 The district/system and the college(s) have established — and utilize — effective methods of communication and exchange information in a timely and efficient manner.

C.6 The district/system has effective processes in place for the establishment and review of policy, planning, and financial management.

PART III

COMMISSION POLICIES

TESTIMONIAL POLICIES

Testimonial Policies have been adopted by the Commission as public position statements. Testimonial policies define good practice in more detail than do the accreditation standards and are intended to offer guidance to member institutions and to the Commission itself. Such policies are adopted after broad consultation among member institutions and with other agencies that make up the regional accrediting community.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

(Adopted June 1980, Revised June 1990)

It is the position of the Commission that the academy has a significant role beyond that of certifying what a student has learned elsewhere. It is within the academy that a student earns academic degrees.

Credit for prior experiential learning is offered only under the conditions enumerated below. This policy is not designed to apply to such practices as CLEP, advanced placement, or ACE evaluated military credit. Questions about this policy should be referred to Commission staff.

In developing and publishing its guidelines and procedures, it is suggested that institutions follow the "Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning" represented by the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL)* and the American Council on Education.**

1. Before credit for prior experiential learning becomes part of the student's permanent record, the student completes, at the credit-granting institution, a sufficient number of units to establish evidence of a satisfactory learning pattern.

2. Portfolio-based credit for prior experiential learning is awarded for no more than 30 semester units, or the equivalent, toward the Associate Degree. Credit is awarded only for documented learning which ties the prior experience to the theories and data of the relevant academic field.

3. Credit is awarded only in areas which fall within the regular curricular offerings of the institution and are part of the instructional program the student completes.

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*Willingham, Warren W. Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning. CAEL, American City Building, Suite 40-3, Columbia, MD 21044, 1977.

**American Council on Education. "Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults." ACE, Publications Department A, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036, 1990.

4. Institutions using documentation and interviews in lieu of examinations demonstrate that the documentation provides academic assurances of equivalency to credit earned by traditional means.

5. No assurances are made in advance regarding the number of credits to be awarded.

6. Credit is awarded only by faculty holding regular appointments in the appropriate discipline. The awarding of credit, and the determination of the amount of such credit, is made by qualified faculty members. The faculty ensures that assessment procedures are appropriate for the credit awarded.

7. Only college level learning is creditable, consistent with the academic standards of the institution.

8. Credit is awarded only to matriculated students and is identified on the student's transcript as "credit for prior experiential learning." The institution is prepared, on request from another institution, to furnish full documentation showing how such learning was evaluated and the basis on which such credit was awarded.

9. Steps are taken to ensure that credit for prior experiential learning does not duplicate credit already awarded or remaining courses planned for the student's academic program.

10. Policies and procedures for awarding experiential learning credit are adopted, described in appropriate institutional publications, and reviewed at regular intervals.

11. Fees charged are realistically related to the cost of the program. Adequate precautions are provided to ensure that payment of fees does not influence the award of credit.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN OVERSEAS INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR NON-U.S. NATIONALS

Regional Institutional Accrediting Bodies
Council on Postsecondary Accreditation

February 1990

Preface

The executive directors of the regional institutional accrediting bodies of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation subscribe to the following "Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals." Each regional institutional accrediting body will apply these Principles consistent with its own accrediting standards.

Principles of Good Practice

Institutional Mission

1. The international program is rooted in the U.S. institution's stated mission and purposes and reflects any special social, religious, and ethical elements of that mission.

2. The faculty, administration, and governing board of the U.S. institution understand the relationship of the international program to the institution's stated mission and purposes.

Authorization

3. The international program has received all appropriate internal approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.

4. The international program has received all appropriate external approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.

5. The U.S. institution documents the accepted legal basis for its operations in the host country.

Instructional Program

6. The U.S. institution specifies the educational needs to be met by its international program.

7. The content of the international educational program is subject to review by the U.S. institution's faculty.

8. The international education program reflects the educational emphasis of the U.S. institution, including a commitment to general education when appropriate.

9. The educational program is taught by faculty with appropriate academic preparation and language proficiencies whose credentials have been reviewed by the U.S. institution.

10. The standard of student achievement in the international program is equivalent to the standard of student achievement on the U.S. campus.

11. The international educational program, where possible and appropriate, is adapted to the culture of the host country.

Resources

12. The institution currently uses and assures the continuing use of adequate physical facilities for its international educational program, including classrooms, offices, libraries, and laboratories, and provides access to computer facilities where appropriate.

13. The U.S. institution has demonstrated its financial capacity to underwrite the international program without diminishing its financial support of the U.S. campus. Financing of the international program is incorporated into the regular budgeting and auditing process.

Admissions and Records

14. International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the U.S. campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.

15. The U.S. institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program.

16. All international students admitted to the U.S. program are recognized as students of the U.S. institution.

17. All college-level academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to degree programs at the U.S. institution.

18. The U.S. institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program.

19. The official transcript of record issued by the U.S. institution follows the institution's practices in identifying by site, or through course numbering, the credits earned in its off-campus programs.

Students

20. The U.S. institution assures that its institutional program provides a supportive environment for student development, consistent with the culture and mores of the international setting.

21. Students in the international program are fully informed as to services that will or will not be provided.

Control and Administration

22. The international program is controlled by the U.S. institution.

23. The teaching and administrative staff abroad responsible for the educational quality of the international program are accountable to a resident administrator of the U.S. institution.

24. The U.S. institution formally and regularly reviews all faculty and staff associated with its international program.

25. The U.S. institution assesses its international program on a regular basis in light of institutional goals and incorporates these outcomes into its regular planning process.

Ethics and Public Disclosure

26. The U.S. institution can provide to its accrediting agencies upon request a full accounting of the financing of its international program, including an accounting of funds designated for third parties within any contractual relationship.

27. The U.S. institution assures that all media presentations about the international program are factual, fair, and accurate.

28. The U.S. institution's primary catalog describes its international program.

29. The U.S. institution does not sell or franchise the rights to its name or its accreditation.

30. The U.S. institution assures that all references to transfer of academic credit reflects the reality of U.S. practice.

31. The U.S. institution assures that if U.S. accreditation is mentioned in materials related to the international program, the role and purpose of U.S. accreditation is fairly and accurately explained within these materials.

Contractual Arrangements

32. The official contract is in English and the primary language of the contracting institution.

33. The contract specifically provides that the U.S. institution controls the international program in conformity with these guidelines and the requirements of the U.S. institution's accreditations.

34. The U.S. institution confirms that the foreign party to the contract is legally qualified to enter into the contract.

35. The contract clearly states the legal jurisdiction under which its provisions will be interpreted will be that of the U.S. institution.

36. Conditions for program termination specified in the contract include appropriate protection for enrolled students.

37. All contractual arrangements must be consistent with the regional commissions' document, "Contractual Relationships With Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations."

Adopted February 12, 1990 by the Executive Directors of the Regional Institutional Accrediting Bodies:

Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Vocational, Technical, and Career Institutions, New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Colleges, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Occupational Education Institutions, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Adopted June 1, 1990 by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR ELECTRONICALLY DELIVERED ACADEMIC DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Recognizing that most institutions must make use of the growing range of systems for delivery of instruction, including various forms of broadcast and other electronic means to serve students at a distance, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has adopted a set of "Principles of Good Practice" to help assure that distance learning is characterized by the same concerns for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to campus-based instruction. The Principles are not a substitute for the Standards for Accreditation, which apply to all educational activities offered in the name of the institution, regardless of where or how presented, or by whom taught.

Application of the Principles

It is expected that an institution conducting distance learning activities will be able to assure at all times that its distance programs and courses are offered in accord with the Principles. An institution seeking to begin distance learning programs for the first time will be asked to demonstrate, as part of the Substantive Change Report, that provisions are in place to assure that the Principles will be adhered to. Institutions completing comprehensive self studies will be expected to provide specific evidence that the Principles are followed.

Curriculum and Instruction

- Each program of study results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
- An electronically delivered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete.
- The program provides for either real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- Qualified faculty provide appropriate oversight of programs delivered electronically.

Institutional Context and Commitment

<u>Role and Mission</u>

- The program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.

- Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of electronic delivery to meeting the program's objectives.

Faculty Support

- The institution provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via electronic delivery.

- The program provides training for faculty who teach via electronic delivery.

Resources for Learning

- The program ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students.

Students and Student Services

- The program provides students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, the nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.

- Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning and assess their progress.

- Accepted students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the program.

- Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

Commitment to Support

- Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate consideration of teaching and scholarly activities related to electronically delivered programs.

- The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support — both financial and technical — and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate.

Evaluation and Assessment

- The institution evaluates the program's educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction. Students have access to such program evaluation data.

- The institution provides for assessment of student achievement in each course and at completion of the program.

Background of the Principles Document

These Principles are the product of a Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications project, "Balancing Quality and Access: Reducing State Policy Barriers to Electronically Delivered Higher Education Programs." The three-year project, supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, was designed to foster an interstate environment that encourages the electronic delivery of higher education programs across state lines. The Principles were developed by a group representing the Western states' higher education regulating agencies, higher education institutions, and the regional accrediting community.

Recognizing that the context for learning in our society is undergoing profound changes, those charged with developing the Principles tried not to tie them to or compare them to campus structures. The Principles were also designed to be sufficiently flexible that institutions offering a range of programs - from graduate degrees to certificates — will find them useful.

Several assumptions form the basis for these Principles:

- The electronically delivered program is offered by or through an institution that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body.

- The institution's programs with specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when delivered electronically.

- The institution may be a traditional higher education institution, a consortium of such institutions, or another type of organization or entity.

- It is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs it provides via technology in terms of its own internally applied definition of these characteristics.

"Principles of Good Practice" was approved by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges on June 11, 1996.

CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-REGIONALLY ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS

(Adopted March 1973)

No postsecondary educational institution accredited by a regional institutional accrediting commission can lend the prestige or authority of its accreditation to authenticate courses or programs offered under contract with organizations not so accredited unless it demonstrates adherence to the following principles:

1. The primary purpose of offering such a course or program is educational. (Although the primary purpose of the offering must be educational, what ancillary purposes also provide the foundation for the program or course such as auxiliary services, anticipated income, and public relations?)

2. Any course offered must be consistent with the institution's educational purpose and objectives as they were at the time of the last evaluation. If the institution alters its purpose and objectives, the regional commission must be notified and the policy on substantive change applied. (How does the institution define the specific relationship between the primary and ancillary purposes and the contracted service and how does it demonstrate its capability to attain these purposes?)

3. Courses to be offered and the value and level of their credit must be determined in accordance with established institutional procedures and under the usual mechanisms of review. (What evidence exists that established institutional procedures have been followed?)

4. Courses offered for credit must remain under the sole and direct control of the sponsoring accredited institution which exercises ultimate and continuing responsibility for the performance of these functions as reflected in the contract, with provisions to assure that conduct of the courses meets the standards of its regular programs as disclosed fully in the institution's publications, especially as these pertain to:

    a. Recruitment and counseling of students.

    b. Admission of students to courses and/or to the sponsoring institution where credit programs are pursued.

c. Instruction in the courses.

d. Evaluation of student progress.

e. Record keeping.

f. Tuition and/or fees charged, receipt and disbursement of funds, and refund policy.

g. Appointment and validation of credentials of faculty teaching the course.

h. Nature and location of courses.

i. Instructional resources, such as the library.

Additional data needed would include course outlines, syllabi, copies of exams, records of students, and evidence of equivalencies with established programs.

In establishing contractual arrangements with non-regionally accredited organizations, institutions are expected to utilize the following guidelines. The not-for-profit institution should establish that its tax-exempt status, as governed by state or federal regulations, will not be affected by such contractual arrangements with a for-profit organization.

The Contract

1. Should be executed only by duly designated officers of the institution and their counterparts in the contracting organization. While other faculty and administrative representatives will undoubtedly be involved in the contract negotiations, care should be taken to avoid implied or apparent power to execute the contract by unauthorized personnel.

2. Should establish a definite understanding between the institution and contractor regarding the work to be performed, the period of the agreement, and the conditions under which any possible renewal or renegotiation of the contract would take place.

3. Should clearly vest the ultimate responsibility for the performance of the necessary control functions for the educational offering with the accredited institution granting credit for the offering. Such performance responsibility by the credit-granting institution would minimally consist of adequate provision for review and approval of work performed in each functional area by the contractor.

4. Should clearly establish the responsibilities of the institution and contractor regarding:

   a. Indirect costs
   b. Approval of salaries
   c. Equipment
   d. Subcontracts and travel
   e. Property ownership and accountability
   f. Inventions and patents
   g. Publications and copyrights
   h. Accounting records and audits
   i. Security
   j. Termination costs
   k. Tuition refund
   l. Student records
   m. Faculty facilities
   n. Safety regulations
   o. Insurance coverage

Enrollment Agreement

1. The enrollment agreement should clearly outline the obligations of both the institution and the student, and a copy of the enrollment agreement should be furnished to the student before any payment is made.

2. The institution should determine that each applicant is fully informed as to the nature of the obligation being entered into and the applicant's responsibilities and rights under the enrollment agreement before the applicant signs it.

3. No enrollment agreement should be binding until it has been accepted by the authorities of the institution vested with this responsibility.

Tuition Policies

1. Rates

   a. The total tuition for any specific course given should be the same for all persons at any given time. Group training contracts showing lower individual rates may be negotiated with business, industrial, or governmental agencies.

   b. Tuition charges in courses should be *bona fide,* effective on specific dates, and applicable to all who enroll thereafter or are presently in school, provided the enrollment agreement so stipulates.

   c. All extra charges and costs incidental to training should be revealed to the prospective student before enrollment.

   d. The institution should show that the total tuition charges for each of its courses is reasonable in the light of the service to be rendered, the equipment to be furnished, and its operating costs.

2. Refunds and Cancellations

   a. The institution should have a fair and equitable tuition refund and cancellation policy.

   b. The institution should publish its tuition refund and cancellation policy in its catalog or other appropriate literature.

3. Collection Practices

   a. Methods used by an institution in requesting or demanding payment should follow sound ethical business practices.

   b. If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties by the institution, enrollees or their financial sponsors should be aware of this action.

Student Recruitment

1. Advertising and Promotional Literature

   a. All advertisements and promotional literature used should be truthful and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.

   b. All advertising and promotional literature used should clearly indicate that education, and not employment, is being offered.

   c. All advertising and promotional literature should include the correct name of the school. So-called "blind" advertisements are considered misleading and unethical.

2. Field Agents

   a. An institution is responsible to its current and prospective students for the representations made by its field representatives (including agencies and other authorized persons or firms soliciting students), and therefore should select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for proper supervision of their work.

   b. It is the responsibility of an institution to conform to the laws and regulations of each of the areas in which it operates or solicits students, and in particular to see that each of its field representatives is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of the state or other entity.

c. If field representatives are authorized to prepare and/or run advertising or to use promotional materials, the institution should accept full responsibility for the materials used and should approve any such in advance of their use.

d. When field representatives are authorized to collect money from an applicant for enrollment, they should leave with the applicant a receipt for the money collected and a copy of the enrollment agreement.

e. No field representative should use any title, such as "counselor," "advisor," or "registrar," that tends to indicate that his duties and responsibilities are other than they actually are.

f. No field agent should violate orally any of the standards applicable to advertising and promotional material.

POLICY STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

(Adopted January 1994)

How an institution deals with diversity is an important indicator of its integrity and effectiveness. Institutions accredited by the Commission consider diversity issues in a thorough and professional manner. Every institution affiliated with the Commission is expected to provide and sustain an environment in which all persons in the college community can interact on a basis of accepting differences, respecting each individual, and valuing diversity. Each institution is responsible for assessing the quality and diversity of its campus environment and for demonstrating how diversity is served by the goals and mission of the college and district. In addition, institutions must identify the processes that actively promote diversity in the everyday environment and the academic programs of the college. Accreditation teams will evaluate the condition of institutional diversity during the site visits and include findings and recommendations in written reports to the Accrediting Commission.

The Commission "Statement on Diversity" is designed to guide institutions and evaluation teams in the self study and site visit process and to indicate how institution-wide reviews of issues of diversity should be documented in the self study and visiting team reports. The Accrediting Commission, taking into account the mission of the institution and the entirety of the self study and peer review processes, will evaluate the institution's effectiveness in addressing issues of diversity.

THE GOVERNING BOARD
(Adopted June 1996)

Institutions of higher education in the United States have a long tradition of governance by lay boards of citizen trustees. A trustee is one to whom property is entrusted for management. In the case of colleges, the board of trustees holds the institution in trust on behalf of the owners to ensure that the institution is operating effectively and efficiently in accordance with its established mission. For private colleges, the owners may be a nonprofit corporation, a religious order or denomination, or a for-profit corporation. For public institutions, the owners may be a governmental entity or a geographic district. In each case the board includes qualified lay persons who are unencumbered by conflicts of interest. Regional accrediting associations require as a condition of eligibility that member institutions have an independent, policy-making board, with a majority of members who have no employment, ownership, familial or personal relationship with the institution. This latter condition is to ensure impartial exercise of judgment on behalf of the owners and users of the institution.

All boards act on behalf of their owners. Owners may be remote and have a limited range of concerns, or they may have a more immediate presence and establish rather detailed expectations. In every case, however, there is a delegation of authority from owners to trustees, with the clear understanding that trustees may act on behalf of owners to direct the affairs of the college without compromising legitimate ownership interests.

Boards of public institutions may be elected or appointed and subject to laws and regulations of the political entity that owns the institution. The practice in private institutions is ordinarily appointment of trustees by a self-perpetuating board, appointment by owners/sponsors, or a combination. The duty of the board is to make policy, while *administration* — the day-to-day management of the institution — is the duty of the chief executive officer and staff. This traditional dividing line is an oversimplification, in that faculty in many institutions play significant roles in policy-making, and administrative authority is, in many cases, delegated to others than the president's staff.

In his paper, "Policy and Administration," published by the Association of Governing Boards, Charles A. Nelson defines policy as "a general rule of principle, or a statement of intent or direction, which provides guidance to administrators in reaching decisions with respect to the particular matters entrusted to their care." Institutions in public systems are guided and directed by laws and regulations that

establish basic rights and responsibilities of their governing boards. Boards that serve private institutions frequently rely on associations such as the Association of Governing Boards or institutional associations of private institutions to offer guidance as to good practice.

A board needs to establish the level of policy at which it will operate, thus determining the levels of policy at which the administration will operate. Where policy responsibility is formally shared, as it may with faculties on academic issues, the board sets boundaries for itself by formal delegation to others. Size and complexity, and public or private control, will influence the level of policy at which a board operates.

Boards need rules, for themselves as well as for the institution. Bylaws or policies that establish regular meeting times, structuring of agendas, decision-making, and codes of ethics, including prohibitions on conflicts of interest, help to not only make the board effective but also to build trust in the integrity of the board.

Oversight responsibility — the obligation to ensure that the mission of the institution is being appropriately served and that its established goals are faithfully pursued — is a major duty of a board. The board asks questions about achievement of intended outcomes, as part of its acting on behalf of the owners of the institution. The board protects the institution from external pressures and is an advocate for the best interests of the institution.

The board must be concerned about its own effectiveness, as well as that of the executive and the institution. Boards systematically evaluate the executive and evaluate their own effectiveness. Board effectiveness may be substantially enhanced by participation in programs of board education offered by organizations such as the Association of Governing Boards, the Association of Community College Trustees, and the Community College League of California.

NATIONAL POLICIES

National Policies adopted by major higher education associations advise accrediting agencies and their member institutions about good practice. The following policies have been adopted by ACCJC and the other regional accrediting agencies. The Commission regularly renews its commitment to the principles expressed in the policies through a process of Commission review. In some cases the original adopting body is no longer in existence; however, the accrediting agencies' joint adoption remains in place.

Note: The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) referred to in several policies dissolved in December 1993. The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) was incorporated in January 1994 to continue the recognition process for accrediting agencies. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation was incorporated in July 1996 to recognize accrediting bodies, coordinate accreditation functions, foster innovation in accreditation, assist in resolving disputes, and serve as a national voice for self-regulation through accreditation.

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE ROLE AND VALUE OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is an activity long accepted in the United States, but generally unknown in most other countries because other countries rely on governmental supervision and control of educational institutions. The record of accomplishment and outstanding success in the education of Americans can be traced in large part to the reluctance of the United States to impose governmental restrictions on institutions of postsecondary education and to the success of the voluntary American system of accreditation in promoting quality without inhibiting innovation. The high proportion of Americans benefiting from higher education, the reputation of universities in the United States for both fundamental and applied research, and the widespread availability of professional services in the United States all testify to postsecondary education of high quality and to the success of the accreditation system which the institutions and professions of the United States have devised to promote that quality.

I.

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or a program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. In the United States accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and programs and is conferred by non-governmental bodies.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to assure the quality of the institution or program, and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program. Accreditation, which applies to institutions or programs, is to be distinguished from certification and licensure, which apply to individuals.

The bodies conducting institutional accreditation are national or regional in scope and comprise the institutions that have achieved and maintain accreditation. A specialized body conducting accreditation of a program preparing students for a profession or occupation is often closely associated with professional associations in the field.

Both institutional and specialized bodies conduct the accreditation process using a common pattern. The pattern requires integral self study of the institution or program, followed by an on-site visit by an evaluation team and a subsequent review and decision by a central governing group. Within this general pattern the various

accrediting bodies have developed a variety of individual procedures adapted to their own circumstances. Increasingly, attention has been given to educational outcomes as a basis for evaluation.

Members of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation have been found by COPA to meet specific criteria of procedure and organization regarded as necessary for the effective conduct of the accrediting process. A COPA-recognized accrediting body can be regarded as qualified to conduct evaluations of institutions and/or programs seeking accreditation, and accreditation by such bodies is generally recognized and accepted in higher education.

Institutional or specialized accreditation cannot guarantee the quality of individual graduates, or of individual courses within an institution or program, but can give reasonable assurance of the context and quality of the education offered.

II.

An institutional accrediting body considers the characteristics of whole institutions. For this reason an institutional accrediting body gives attention not only to the educational offerings of the institutions it accredits, but also to other such institutional characteristics as the student personnel services, financial conditions, and administrative strength.

The criteria of an institutional accrediting body are broad, as is demanded by the attention to an entire institution and by the presence in the United States of postsecondary institutions of widely different purposes and scopes. Such criteria also provide encouragement to institutions to try innovative curricula and procedures and to adopt them when they prove successful. The accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to the general public that the institution:

a. Has appropriate purposes.

b. Has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes.

c. Can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes.

d. Gives reason to believe that it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Institutional improvement is encouraged by an institutional accrediting body through the requirement that the accredited institution conduct periodic self-evaluations seeking to identify what the institution does well, determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and developing plans to address needed improvements.

While the certification of accreditation indicates an acceptable level of institutional quality, an institution, however excellent, is capable of improvement, which must come from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Institutional improvement is also encouraged by the institutional accrediting body through the advice and counsel provided by the visiting team, which is comprised of experienced educators drawn primarily from accredited institutions, and by the publications of the accrediting body.

III.

A specialized accrediting body focuses its attention on a particular program within an institution of higher education. The close relationship of the specialized accrediting body with the professional association for the field helps insure that the requirements for accreditation are related to the current requirements for professional practice.

In a number of fields (*e.g.*, medicine, law, dentistry) graduation from an accredited program in the field is a requirement for receiving a license to practice in the field. Thus, specialized accreditation is recognized as providing a basic assurance of the scope and quality of professional or occupational preparation. This focus of specialized accreditation leads to accreditation requirements that are generally sharply directed to the nature of the program, including specific requirements for resources needed to provide a program satisfactory for professional preparation. Because of this limitation of focus to a single program, many specialized accrediting bodies require that the institution offering the program be institutionally accredited before consideration can be given to program accreditation.

Specialized accreditation encourages program improvement by application of specific accreditation requirements to measure characteristics of a program and by making judgments about the overall quality of the program. For a non-accredited program, the accreditation requirements serve as specific goals to be achieved. In addition to accrediting standards, assistance for program improvement is provided through the counsel of the accreditation visiting team members, which include practitioners of the profession and experienced and successful faculty members and administrators in other institutions.

IV.

Institutional and specialized accreditation are complementary. The focus of an institutional accrediting body on an institution as a total operating unit provides assurance that the general characteristics of the institution have been examined and found to be satisfactory. The focus of a specialized accrediting body on a specific program provides assurance that the details of that particular program meet the external accreditation standards. Institutional accreditation, concerned with evaluating the institution as a whole, does not seek to deal with any particular program in great detail, although programs are reviewed as a part of the consideration of the entire institution. Specialized accreditation, speaking to a specific program, does not seek to deal significantly with the general conditions of the institution, although certain general conditions are considered in the context in which the accredited program is offered. Occasionally there are institutions offering but a single program ("free-standing" schools), which may seek institutional and/or specialized accreditation. In such cases, the certification of the accreditation is appropriate to either institutional or specialized accreditation and does not imply both certifications, although a specialized body accrediting such an institution is expected to look at the whole institution, just as the institutional body is expected to consider the single educational program.

V.

In fulfilling its two purposes — quality assurance and institutional and program improvement — accreditation provides service of value to several constituencies.

To the **public**, the values of accreditation include:

a. An assurance of external evaluation of the institution or program and a finding that there is conformity to general expectations in higher education or the professional field.

b. An identification of institutions and programs which have voluntarily undertaken explicit activities directed at improving the quality of the institution and its professional programs and are carrying them out successfully.

c. An improvement in the professional services available to the public, as accredited programs modify their requirements to reflect changes in knowledge and practice generally accepted in the field.

d. A decreased need for intervention by public agencies in the operations of educational institutions, since their institutions through accreditation are

providing privately for the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality.

To **students**, accreditation provides:

a. An assurance that the educational activities of an accredited institution or program have been found to be satisfactory and therefore meet the needs of students.

b. Assistance in the transfer of credits between institutions, or in the admission of students to advanced degrees through the general acceptance of credits among accredited institutions when the performance of the student has been satisfactory and the credits to be transferred are appropriate to the receiving institution.

c. A prerequisite in many cases for entering a profession.

Institutions of higher education benefit from accreditation through:

a. The stimulus provided for self-evaluation and self-directed institutional and program improvement.

b. The strengthening of institutional and program self-evaluation by the review and counsel provided through the accrediting body.

c. The application of criteria of accrediting bodies, generally accepted throughout higher education, which help guard against external encroachments harmful to institutional or program quality by providing benchmarks independent of forces that might impinge on individual institutions.

d. The enhancing of the reputation of an accredited institution or program because of public regard for accreditation.

e. The use of accreditation as one means by which an institution can gain eligibility for the participation of itself and its students in certain programs of governmental aid to postsecondary education. Accreditation is also usually relied upon by private foundations as a highly desirable indicator of institutional and program quality.

Accreditation serves the **professions** by:

a. Providing a means for the participation of practitioners in setting the requirements for preparation to enter the professions.

b. Contributing to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers, and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparation and professional practice.

Adopted by the COPA Board
April 15, 1982

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

POLICY STATEMENT ON RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACCREDITING BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE ACCREDITING PROCESS

Preface

American postsecondary education is a diverse, semi-autonomous, and independent composite of institutions and programs. In the diversity of the system lies its strength. By design, postsecondary education functions with considerable latitude and few restrictions. Compared with most other countries, in America there has been a remarkable degree of freedom from government regulation and intrusion. This freedom has been achieved and maintained in large measure because the self-regulatory process of accreditation balances institutional autonomy, independence, and freedom with the institution's responsibilities to students, to the public, to the profession, and to various levels of government. Voluntary accreditation involves mutual understanding and respect for the rights and responsibilities of institutions and the rights and responsibilities of accrediting bodies. The national, nongovernmental accreditation system is the key in ensuring that education remains fundamentally sound, responsible, responsive, and effective, thereby providing public confidence in the integrity and quality of educational institutions and programs.

Preconditions

A statement related to rights and responsibilities of institutions/programs and accrediting bodies is rooted in general assumptions:

1. That the institutions/programs and accrediting bodies are partners in the system of voluntary nongovernmental evaluation.

2. That there is a mutual commitment among institutions/programs and accrediting bodies to:

    a. Voluntary self-regulation
    b. Assessment and enhancement of educational quality
    c. Candor
    d. Cooperation
    e. Integrity
    f. Confidence and trust

Given these preconditions, there are certain reciprocal institutional/programmatic and accrediting body rights and responsibilities that relate directly (1) to the development and promulgation of accreditation standards and (2) to the various stages of the accrediting process.

A. Development and Promulgation of Standards

Institutions/programs and accrediting bodies, in cooperation with each other, have the responsibility to:

1. Involve broad participation of affected constituencies in the development and acceptance of standards and policies.

2. Develop standards and policies which:

   a. Are consistent with the purposes of accreditation.

   b. Are sufficiently flexible to allow diversity and effective program development.

   c. Allow and encourage institutional/programmatic freedom and autonomy.

   d. Allow the institution/program to exercise its rights within a reasonable set of parameters relevant to the quality of education and, in professional fields, to prepare individuals effectively for practice in the profession.

3. Conduct periodic reviews of the standards.

B. Five Stages of Accreditation Actions or Process and Concomitant Statements of Rights and Responsibilities

Stage 1: Basic Procedures

a. The institution/program develops and implements an institutional policy for seeking, securing, and maintaining accredited status with institutional or specialized accrediting bodies.

b. The institution/program develops an effective mechanism to ensure the internal coordination of accrediting activities.

c. In corresponding with representatives on campus, the accrediting body routinely provides copies to the chief executive and, where appropriate, the chief academic officer and/or director of the program.

d. The accrediting body refrains from advertising or soliciting applications for accreditation from institutions/programs.

Stage 2: Information Requested and Supplied (Including the Self Study)

a. The institution/program determines how it will conduct its self study and the accrediting body specifies the items to be addressed in the report.

b. The accrediting body requires only information that is relevant to accrediting standards and policies, and, whenever possible, this information will be coordinated with information requested by other accrediting bodies.

c. The institution/program involves broad and appropriate constituent groups in the preparation and process of self study.

d. The institution/program discloses to the accrediting body that information which is required to carry out the accrediting body's evaluation and accrediting functions (with due regard to individual privacy).

e. The accrediting body and institution/program respect the confidentiality of information required and evaluated in the accrediting process.

Stage 3: The Site Visit and Review

a. When requested by the institution/program, the accrediting body (in consultation with the institution/program and when feasible) conducts joint, concurrent, coordinated, consolidated, or phased visits.

b. The accrediting body, in consultation with the institution/program, selects site visitors who are:

   1. Competent by virtue of experience, training, and orientation.

   2. Sensitive to the uniqueness of the institution and/or program. and

   3. Impartial, objective, and without conflict of interest.

c. The accrediting body ensures that the composition, team size, and length of the visit are:

   1. Determined in consultation with the institution/program.

   2. Determined with regard to the size and complexity of the institution/program.

   3. Most appropriate to accomplish the objectives of the visit.

d. **The institution/program provides maximum opportunity for communication with all relevant constituencies.**

e. **The accrediting body communicates its findings derived from the site visit to the institution/program.**

f. **The accrediting body ensures that the report identifies and distinguishes clearly between statements directly related to quality-assessment and those representing suggestions for quality-improvement.**

g. **The accrediting body provides the chief executive officer of the institution (and the chief academic officer and/or the director of the program) with an opportunity to comment on the written report of the visiting team and to file supplemental materials pertinent to the facts and conclusions therein before the accrediting body takes action on the report.**

Stage 4: The Decision (Including the Following)

- Commission action
- Conveyance of action
- Appeal
- Public announcement of action

a. **The accrediting body permits the withdrawal of a request for any status of accreditation at any time prior to the decision on that request.**

b. **The accrediting body makes decisions solely on the basis of published standards, policies, and procedures using information available and made known to the institution/program.**

c. **The accrediting body avoids conflicts of interest in the decision-making process.**

d. **The accrediting body ensures the confidentiality of those deliberations in which accrediting decisions are made, but due process will be observed in all deliberations.**

e. **The accrediting body notifies institutions and programs promptly in writing of accrediting decisions, giving reasons for the actions.**

f. **The accrediting body ensures that the communication of the final accrediting decision, *i.e.*, the notification letter and/or final report, identifies and clearly distinguishes between statements directly related to quality-assessment and those representing suggestions for quality-improvement.**

g. The institution/program has a right to appeal an accrediting decision in accordance with the policies of the accrediting body and to maintain its accredited status during the appeal.

h. The accrediting body publishes accrediting decisions, both affirmative and negative, except for initial denial which need not be made public.

i. The accrediting body maintains the confidentiality of the final report, but it may request that corrective action be taken if an institution/program releases information misrepresenting or distorting any accreditation action taken by the body or the status of affiliation with the accrediting body. If the institution/program is not prompt in taking corrective action, the accrediting body may further release a public statement providing the correct information.

Stage 5: Follow-Up (Including Interim Reports and Reapplication)

a. The accrediting body can request periodic reports, special reports, and consultative activities relevant to the institution's/program's accreditation status.

b. The accrediting body provides written notice to the institution/program of the action taken in relation to a special report or visit.

c. The accrediting body may request the reevaluation of an institution/program at any time for cause.

d. The institution/program has an obligation to inform the accrediting body of any substantive changes.

e. The institution/program has a right to have pertinent information provided concerning reapplication requirements for accreditation under the terms and conditions specified by the accrediting body.

f. Separate from the accrediting process leading to a decision on accredited status, the accrediting body assists and stimulates improvement of the educational effectiveness of an institution/program, and to this end makes provision for appropriate assistance.

Adopted by the COPA Board
April 19, 1985

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

POLICY STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN INSTITUTIONAL ADVERTISING, STUDENT RECRUITMENT, AND REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

All accredited postsecondary institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to "Principles of Good Practice."

I. Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.

2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.

3. Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict:

   a. Institutional purposes and objectives.

   b. Entrance requirements and procedures.

   c. Basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated.

   d. Degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certification of completion.

   e. Faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution.

   f. Institutional facilities readily available for educational use.

   g. Rules and regulations for conduct.

   h. Tuition, fees, and other program costs.

   i. Opportunities and requirements for financial aid.

j. Policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment.[1]

4. In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided on:

   a. National and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered.

   b. Any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

II. Student Recruitment for Admissions[2]

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified.

2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same Principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

3. The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:

   a. Assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified.

   b. Misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates.

   c. Misrepresenting program costs.

   d. Misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program.

   e. Offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment.

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[1]See ACE Guidelines #1: "Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges"

[2]See ACE Guidelines #2: "Joint Statement of Principles of Good Practice in College Admissions and Recruitment"

(Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

III. Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term "accreditation" is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and/or the U.S. Secretary of Education.

2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible: "(Name of institution) has applied for candidacy with the Commission on Colleges of the _____ Association;" "The _____ program is being evaluated by the National Association of _____, and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future."

3. Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.

4. The phrase "fully accredited" should be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

5. When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, including:

   a. Identifying the accrediting body by name.

   b. Indicating the scope of accreditation as:

      1) Institutional (regional or national).

         Example:

         The University of Southern Yukon is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

      2) Programmatic (curriculum or unit accredited must be specified).

Examples:

Programs in (Civil Engineering and Aeronautical Engineering) are accredited by the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

The Department of Music at the University of Hiawatha is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

Programs for the preparation of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers at the bachelor's and master's level, for the preparation of guidance counselors at the master's and specialist degree level, and for school superintendents at the specialist and doctoral degree level, are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

6. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented.

   a. The accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like "this program is accredited," or "this degree is accredited," are incorrect and misleading.

   b. "Free-standing" institutions offering programs in a single field, *e.g.*, a school of art, engineering, theology, granted accreditation by a regional or national institutional accrediting body alone, should clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the program offered.

Member agencies of CORPA should assume responsibility for informing the CORPA office of improper or misleading advertising or unethical practices which come to their attention, so that CORPA may inform the appropriate accrediting association or associations.

Adopted by the COPA Board
April 20, 1983

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

POLICY STATEMENT ON ACCREDITATION AND AUTHORIZATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING THROUGH TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Introduction

This statement summarizes the results of a two-year study on assessing long distance learning by telecommunications. The study, co-sponsored by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, focused on the rapid development and use of telecommunications to offer postsecondary education and the need to ensure the quality and integrity of this instructional activity. It was supported by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, whose views it does not necessarily reflect.

A series of task forces and advisory committees were responsible for developing the components in the statement. During their deliberations, each group affirmed the need to address the quality of telecommunications instruction within the existing assessment framework, which includes state authorization, non-government voluntary accreditation, and institutional self-regulation. This belief is reinforced in the principles and procedures which follow. The following definition was used during the study:

Telecommunications instruction is any course or series of courses offered or sponsored by a postsecondary education institution, consortium of institutions, or other organization, for which credit is offered or awarded toward a certificate, diploma, or degree. The course or courses must have, as the primary mode of delivery, television, video cassette or disc, film, radio, computer, or other supportive devices which build upon the audio-video format. In many instances, the telecommunications course is supported by textbooks, study guides, library resources, and other study aids, and may also involve personal interaction with faculty, tutors, or other educational personnel by telephone, mail, or in face-to-face meetings.

I. General Principles

A. The assessment of programs delivered by telecommunications should take place within the context of an institution's or other organization's total education mission.

B. The policies and procedures for assessing long distance learning should not discourage the development and use of technology for educational purposes. Specific requirements by state authorizing agencies and accrediting bodies should accommodate constructive innovation.

C. The focus of states' authorization and of non-governmental accreditation activity in long-distance learning by telecommunications should be on postsecondary institutions and other organizations which award credit that can be applied toward academic degrees, or which provide other credentials that have credit-bearing significance, such as programs leading to certification of proficiency or licensure. Authorization and accreditation requirements should not apply to those institutions and organizations which are involved only in the production of courses or support materials.

D. State authorization activities are and should be the initial step and a necessary prerequisite to accreditation in the assessment of long-distance learning by telecommunications.

E. The states have a responsibility in consumer protection which should be reinforced as necessary. States without adequate authorization legislation are urged to develop such legislation.

F. Institutions and other organizations involved in telecommunications instruction, as in other instructional activities, should use and further develop rigorous outcome measures to assess program effectiveness. Accrediting bodies and state authorizing agencies should validate and use such measures to the greatest possible extent in their evaluation activities.

G. The focus of the assessment activity for long-distance learning by telecommunications conducted by educational institutions should be accreditation, either institutional or professional, as appropriate to the offerings.

H. The interests of higher education and the general public are best served when institutions voluntarily seek appropriate approval, even in situations in which they may not be required to do so. Toward this end, the accreditation and authorization of telecommunications-based educational programs should be thorough and reasonable. If this can be accomplished, then the institutional burden of seeking approval will be a reasonable price to pay for increased public confidence.

I. The necessity of an institution's seeking state authorization depends in large measure upon the institution's "physical presence" in the state or states in which it wishes to operate. Although there is yet no clear legal definition of "physical presence," the following guidelines have been developed:

1. The act of transmitting an electronic signal into another state without any other contact within that state does not, under current laws, constitute physical presence. Similarly, the use of an interstate interactive computer system to deliver educational services — absent any other in-state contact — would not necessarily create jurisdiction over the out-of-state institution.

2. The use of interstate mail and telephone services to provide instructional and related services to students involves protected interstate commerce and, therefore, generally cannot be subjected to state regulation.

3. The presence of an institutional recruiter (agent) in a state may constitute sufficient physical presence of an institution in that state to subject it to licensure. It may also subject the institution to other legal constraints.

4. Support services that include institutional representatives in a state, such as tutors, counselors, or instructors, in most instances establish physical presence sufficient to afford the state jurisdiction through its approval mechanism.

II. Procedures

A. A primary and fundamental objective is the development of close-working relations among state-authorizing agencies, accrediting bodies, and institutions. They should undertake to reexamine and develop regulations, standards, and criteria for use in the evaluation of instruction delivered by telecommunications. State agencies and accrediting bodies should work together to ensure that state authorization provisions and procedures and accrediting standards complement each other. By undertaking this joint effort, a second objective of reducing the multiple and repetitive procedures currently required for institutions operating in several jurisdictions may be realized. The following procedures are suggested as an initial step toward meeting those objectives:

1. With respect to the states:

   a. States should provide mechanisms to exchange information with each other and with accrediting bodies concerning standards, procedures, and actions relating to the authorization of institutions to operate and grant degrees.

   b. State-authorizing agencies should seek more uniform authorization requirements so that educational institutions eventually can receive authorization in all jurisdictions through common assessment procedures.

c. The states have constitutional and statutory responsibility to provide and supervise education. In those states where statutes providing supervision of postsecondary institutions currently do not exist, appropriate legislation should be sought, and the means for reviewing and authorizing educational operations and institutions should be established. Due consideration should be given to instruction delivered by telecommunications.

d. The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association should continue to work closely with the states to attain these objectives.

2. With respect to regional, national, and specialized accrediting bodies:

a. Accrediting bodies should continue to develop standards and procedures for off-campus programs, including instruction delivered by telecommunications, in harmony with the COPA policy statement on off-campus operations and institutional and accrediting bodies'agreements of understanding.

b. Accrediting bodies, through COPA, should create better mechanisms for the exchange of information with each other and with all affected state agencies concerning standards, procedures, and actions relating to the accreditation of institutions and programs and their off-campus activities, including instruction delivered by telecommunications.

c. Accrediting bodies, as they do now for all other programs, should require institutions involved in long-distance learning by telecommunications to have the appropriate authorization to operate in any state in which they wish to offer instruction.

d. Accrediting bodies should require demonstration by an institution or, in the case of specialized accreditation, by the program under evaluation that its students achieve the educational objectives set for them. Currently-accepted criteria of accreditation can be applied to institutions and programs offering long-distance learning or using telecommunications and other electronic techniques. These criteria require, in accordance with accreditation standards, that institutions or programs:

1) Have clearly-defined and appropriate educational objectives.

2) Have the resources and structure needed to accomplish these objectives.

3) Demonstrate that these objectives are being accomplished.

4) Give reasons to believe that these objectives will continue to be accomplished.

e. The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation should continue to work closely with accrediting bodies to attain these objectives.

III. Implementation

The following specific procedures are suggested to effect these recommendations:

A. An institution should give to the appropriate state agencies and accrediting bodies advance notice of intent to initiate programs using telecommunications that provide credit applicable toward degrees.

B. To obtain appropriate recognition from state agencies and accrediting bodies, the following strategy is suggested:

1. An institution would provide documentation on the objectives and scope of its programs using telecommunications, including provision for instruction and instructional support. This information would be provided on the "Institutional Profile for Telecommunications Instruction," a document designed to provide state agencies and accrediting bodies with crucial information about telecommunications-based activities.

2. State agencies and accrediting bodies would review the documentation to determine whether the instruction and instructional support meet the established requirements and standards.

3. The documentation would be audited, as appropriate, by state agencies and accrediting bodies and certified as being complete, accurate, and representative of the institution's telecommunications activities. The certified documentation could then be made available to any state agency or accrediting body needing such information.

4. If proper quality and quality controls are evident, approval would be granted by state agencies and accrediting bodies to include the activity within the institution's recognized status.

5. If necessary to reach a sound decision, a state agency or accrediting body might request additional documentation or schedule an on-site visit. The

institution, for its part, might withdraw its request without prejudice or appeal any adverse decision to the appropriate body or bodies consistent with due process procedures.

C. Interregional or other agreements envisioning a single accrediting activity for an institution, conducted cooperatively by two or more accrediting bodies, should be fully implemented as they relate to long distance learning so that the accreditation of an institution can be conducted in a single process.

Conclusion

The principles and procedures recommended in this statement were formulated to ensure the highest quality and integrity of instruction delivered by telecommunications. If adopted by state-authorizing agencies and accrediting bodies, there will be a better likelihood of increased cooperation between them, and an important step will have been taken toward instituting common, reasonable, and thorough approval practices.

Adopted by the COPA Board
October 11, 1984

and by the

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
August 1, 1984

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

POLICY STATEMENT ON CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CLOSING A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

I. Preparing the Way

A decision to close an educational institution requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency as fully as possible about the conditions requiring consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. Before closing, such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive inter-institutional sharing and cooperation should be carefully considered. As much as possible, the determination to close an institution should involve a consultative process, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the board of governors.

Tradition and sentiment are important considerations, but sentimentality should not be allowed to determine events. A decision to close should never be made or reversed simply on the basis of fears, hopes, or aspirations that have little relation to reality. Neither should it be delayed to the point where the institution has lost its viability and its educational program no longer retains quality and integrity. Since the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive attention and involvement.

It is assumed that closing an institution means a decision permanently to discontinue its educational activities, not merely to suspend them for an indefinite period in the hope that circumstances may someday permit their resumption. But it should be noted that most institutions of higher education are corporations established under the provisions of state law, and as such may have legal responsibilities (holding title to real property, for example) that may necessitate the continued existence of the corporation after the educational activities of the institution have been terminated. Indeed, it is probable that such continued corporate existence, at least for a time, will prove to be the usual situation. It is unlikely that in most cases corporate existence and educational activities can be terminated simultaneously.

II. Closing an Institution

A decision to close requires specific plans for providing in appropriate ways for the students, the faculty, the administrative and support staff, and for the disposition of the institution's assets. Many considerations bear upon closing an educational institution, and each situation will be unique. Public institutions, seminaries, church-

related colleges — the nature and sponsorship of each institution — require different emphasis and pose particular conditions to be met in reaching and carrying out the ultimate decision. Nevertheless, general guidelines may be helpful to each institution considering closing.

This statement makes only incidental reference to such corporate responsibilities and always in the educational context. It is imperative, therefore, that a Board of Trustees considering closing an institution under its care should be guided not only by guidelines such as these and by the state educational authorities, but also by advice of legal counsel. Special counsel to advise with respect to problems of closing may be desirable for the institution. Institutional and specialized accrediting bodies should also be consulted and be kept fully apprised of developments.

A. The Students

Students who have not completed their degrees should be provided for according to their academic needs. Arrangements for transfer to other institutions will require that complete academic records, and all other related information, be gathered in dossiers which can be transmitted promptly to receiving institutions. Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept their records must be submitted to the Accrediting Commission for approval. Where financial aid is concerned, particularly federal or state grants, arrangements should be made with the appropriate agencies to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. Where such arrangements cannot be completed, students should be fully informed. In cases where students have held institutional scholarships or grants and there are available funds which can legally be used to support students while completing degrees at other institutions, appropriate agreements should be negotiated.

B. Academic Records and Financial Aid Transcripts

All academic, financial aid information, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing, including microfilming. Arrangements should be made with the state department of higher education or other appropriate agency for filing of student records. If there is no state educational agency which can receive records, arrangements should be made with another college or university or with the state archives to preserve the records. Notification should be sent to every current and past student indicating where the records are being stored and what the accessibility to those records will be. Where possible, a copy of a student's record should also be forwarded to the individual student.

C. Completion of Institutional Obligations

When a student chooses to continue at another institution, but is within a year to 18 months of completing an academic degree at the closing institution, arrangements

may be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a degree elsewhere but to receive it from the closed institution. This may require special action by the appropriate state agency. Such arrangements should also include provision for continuation of the institution's accreditation only for this purpose by the accrediting agency involved. These steps normally require the institution to continue as a legal corporate entity for 12 to 18 months beyond the closing date, but any such arrangement must be established in careful consultation with the appropriate authorities and with their written consent.

D. Provision for Faculty and Staff

In every possible case, the institution should arrange for continuation of those faculty and staff who will be necessary for the completion of the institution's work up to the closing date. When faculty and staff are no longer needed, the institution should make every effort to assist them in finding alternative employment. It should be understood that the institution can make no guarantees, but genuinely good faith efforts to assist in relocation and reassignment are essential. In the event that faculty or staff members find new positions, early resignations should be accepted.

III. The Final Determination

Determinations must be made to allocate whatever financial resources and assets remain after the basic needs of current students, faculty, and staff are provided for. When the financial resources of the institution are inadequate to honor commitments, the Board should investigate what alternatives and protection are available under applicable bankruptcy laws before deciding to close. If funds are insufficient to maintain normal operations through the end of the closing process, the institution should not overlook the possibility of soliciting one-time gifts and donations to assist in fulfilling its final obligations.

Every effort should be made to develop publicly-defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution. One of the best ways of achieving this goal is to involve potential claimants in the process of developing the policies. Time and effort devoted to carrying the process to a judicious conclusion may considerably reduce the likelihood of lawsuits or other forms of confrontation.

It is impossible to anticipate in advance the many claims that might be made against remaining resources of an institution, but the following three principles may help to sort out possible claims and to set priorities:

a. Students have the right to expect basic minimal services during the final semester, not only in the academic division but also in the business office, financial aid office, registrar's office, counseling, and other essential support

services. Staff should be retained long enough to provide these services. It may be appropriate to offer special incentives to keep key personnel present.

b. Reasonable notice is given to all employees, explaining the possibility of early termination of contracts and that the reasons for retaining some personnel longer than others are based on satisfying the minimal needs of students and the legal requirements for closing.

c. Every effort should be made to honor long-term financial obligations (loans, debentures, etc.) even though the parties holding such claims may choose not to press them.

IV. The Closing Date

The Board of Trustees should take a formal vote to terminate the institution on a specified date. That date will depend on a number of factors, including the decision to file or not to file for bankruptcy. Another key factor is whether or not all obligations to students will have been satisfactorily discharged. This is particularly important if the decision is made to allow seniors in their final year to graduate from the institution by completing their degree requirements elsewhere. If such arrangements are made, the Board must be sure to take the legal action necessary to permit awarding degrees after the institution otherwise ceases to function. Normally, formal vote to award a degree is made after all requirements have been met, but it is legally possible to make arrangements for a student to complete the requirements for a degree at another institution and to receive the degree from the closed institution. These requirements must be clearly specified, along with a deadline for completion. Also, the Board must identify the person or persons authorized to determine whether or not these requirements have in fact been satisfied. Arrangements must be completed with the appropriate state and accrediting agencies in advance in order to assure that the degree is awarded by a legally authorized and accredited institution.

V. Disposition of Assets

In the case of a not-for-profit institution, the legal requirements of the state and the federal government must be carefully examined with respect to the disposition of institutional assets. Arrangements for the sale of the physical plant, equipment, the library, special collections, art, or other funds must be explored with legal counsel. In the case of wills, endowments, or special grants, the institution should discuss with the donors, grantors, executors of estates, and other providers of special funds arrangements to accommodate their wishes. State laws regarding the disposition of funds from a nonprofit institution must be meticulously followed.

All concerned federal and state agencies need to be apprised of the institution's situation and any obligations relating to estate or federal funds need to be cleared with the proper agencies.

VI. Other Considerations

The institution should establish a clear understanding with its creditors, and all other agencies involved with its activities, to assure that their claims and interests will be properly processed. Insofar as possible, the institution should assure that its final arrangements will not be subject to later legal proceedings which might jeopardize the records or status of its students or faculty.

VII. Conclusion

The closing of an educational institution is never a happy event. Nevertheless, such action can be rendered less traumatic by careful attention to the details of the legal and moral obligations of the institution. Closing will be marked by sadness, but well-planned and conscientious efforts to assure that the institution's students, faculty, and staff will be optimally provided for, and that its assets will be used in ways that will honor the intentions of the original donors, should help in avoiding bitterness and rancor. A final report on the closing should be submitted to the appropriate accrediting and state agencies for their records.

Note: The most recent and comprehensive reference work, which includes summaries of state regulations regarding disposition of student records and dissolution of non-profit colleges and universities is the following:

O'Neill, Joseph P. and Barnett, Samuel. College and Corporate Change: Merger, Bankruptcy, and Closure. Princeton, N.J., Conference University Press, 1980.

Adopted by the COPA Board
April 15, 1982

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

JOINT POLICY STATEMENT ON TRANSFER AND AWARD OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

Council on Postsecondary Accreditation • American Council on Education/ Commission on Educational Credit • American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

This statement is directed to institutions of postsecondary education and others concerned with the transfer of academic credit among institutions and award of academic credit for extra-institutional learning. Basic to this statement is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. Institutions are encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to assure that they accomplish the institution's objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. Any statements, this one or others referred to, should be used as guides, not as substitutes, for institutional policies and practices.

Transfer of credit is a concept that now involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula of similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness, as well as the wise use of resources, for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of transfer credit. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution's responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student's knowledge in required subject areas. All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of the work. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise the students that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution.

Inter-institutional Transfer of Credit

Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least the following three considerations:

1. The educational quality of the institution from which the student transfers.

2. The comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned to that offered by the receiving institution.

3. The appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student's educational goals.

Accredited Institutions

Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets certain minimum standards. Users of accreditation are urged to give careful attention to the accreditation conferred by accrediting bodies recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). COPA has a formal process of recognition which requires that any accrediting body so recognized must meet the same standards. Under these standards, COPA has recognized a number of accrediting bodies, including:

1. Regional accrediting commissions (which historically accredited the more traditional colleges and universities but which now accredit proprietary, vocational-technical, and single-purpose institutions as well).

2. National accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institutions.

3. Certain professional organizations that accredit free-standing professional schools, in addition to programs within multi-purpose institutions. (COPA annually publishes a list of recognized accrediting bodies, as well as a directory of institutions accredited by these organizations.)

Although accrediting agencies vary in the ways they are organized and in their statements of scope and mission, all accrediting bodies that meet COPA's standards for recognition function to assure that the institutions or programs they accredit have met generally-accepted minimum standards for accreditation.

Comparability and Applicability

Comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogues and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions. When such

considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institution should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions are qualified to undertake the receiving institution's educational program.

Accreditation affords reason for confidence in an institution's or a program's purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability, but does not guarantee, that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

Admissions and Degree Purposes

At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student.

Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction, and its implications, clear to students before they decide to enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Unaccredited Institutions

Institutions of postsecondary education that are not accredited by COPA-recognized accrediting bodies may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however, cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining acceptance and transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

Foreign Institutions

In most cases, foreign institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education. Although this provides for a standardization within a country, it does not produce useful information about comparability from one country to another. No other nation has a system

comparable to voluntary accreditation. The Division of Higher Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is engaged in a project to develop international compacts for the acceptance of educational credentials. At the operational level, four organizations — the Council on International Exchange (CIEE), the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials (CEC), the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA), and the National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions (NLC) — often can assist institutions by distributing general guidelines on admission and placement of foreign students. Equivalency or placement recommendations are to be evaluated in terms of the programs and policies of the individual receiving institutions.

Validation of Extra-institutional and Experiential Learning for Transfer Purposes

Transfer-of-credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings as well as at accredited postsecondary institutions. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education's Office of Educational Credit helpful. One of the Office's functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra institutional learning. The Office maintains evaluation programs for formally structured courses offered by the military, and civilian non-collegiate sponsors such as businesses, corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs, for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the National Home Study Council. The results are published in a "Guide" series. Another resource is the General Education Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency.

For learning that has not been validated through the ACE formal credit recommendation process or through credit-by-examination programs, institutions are urged to explore the Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes. Pertinent CAEL publications designed for this purpose are also listed.

Uses of this Statement

This statement has been endorsed by the three national associations most concerned with practices in the area of transfer and award of credit: the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education/Commission on Educational Credit, and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation.

Institutions are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regard to transfer. If the statement reflects an institution's policies, that institution might want to use this publication to inform faculty, staff, and students.

It is recommended that accrediting bodies reflect the essential precepts of this statement in their criteria.

Adopted by the COPA Board
October 10, 1978

Approved by the American Council on Education/Commission on Educational Credit
December 5, 1978

Approved by the Executive Committee, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
November 21, 1978

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

SELF-REGULATION INITIATIVES: GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR REFUND OF STUDENT CHARGES

Background

National attention has for some time focused on the matter of fair and equitable refund of student charges and fees. Since 1976, federal law has required that all institutions receiving federal student-aid funds have equitable refund policies. Within the higher education community the belief has grown that policy guidelines for voluntary self-regulation, developed by higher education representatives, are preferable to governmental definitions and regulations. To this end, the American Council on Education and other associations urged the National Association of College and University Business Officers to prepare policy guidelines for refunding student fees.

The guidelines were drafted by NACUBO's Student-Related Programs Committee and were reviewed by persons representing a wide range of institutions and professional responsibilities. Associations that have approved the guidelines are listed below. The guidelines have gained acceptance by officials in the U.S. Office of Education. Leo Kornfeld, Deputy Commissioner for Student Financial Assistance, lauded the effort as important progress toward self-regulation and indicated that, as a result, the USOE will not proceed with developing regulations for tuition refund policies of colleges and universities.

The guidelines summarize elements of fair and equitable policy in refunding tuition, room, board, and other charges for students who withdraw from their studies or otherwise discontinue their use of an institution's services before the end of an academic term. They offer a balanced approach to issues related to refunds, including the financial commitments incurred by the institution and the responsibility to treat both withdrawing and continuing students fairly. Overall, they allow institutions to ensure that their students' rights to fair and equitable treatment are fully recognized.

Colleges and universities are urged to use the guidelines to evaluate and, where necessary, modify current institutional policies and practices to meet the spirit and intent of the guidelines.

GUIDELINE ONE. **The governing board of the institution should review and approve the schedule of all institutional charges and refund policies applicable to students.** The pricing of services and refund policies have important consequences to students, parents, the institution, and society; as such, pricing and refund policies should receive board attention and approval.

GUIDELINE TWO. **Institutions should seek consumer views in the process of establishing and amending charge and refund structures.** Decisions regarding institutional funds are ultimately the sole responsibility of the institution's legally-designated fund custodians. However, consumer concerns do affect decision making, and involving consumers in decision making related to charges and refunds is a desirable approach for assessing student needs and creating public awareness of institutional requirements.

GUIDELINE THREE. **Institutions should publish a current schedule of all student charges, a statement of the purpose for such charges and related refund policies, and have them readily available free of charge to current and prospective students.** Students and parents have a right to know what charges they will be expected to pay and what will or will not be refunded. They also have a right to know what services accompany payment of the charges. Informational materials published free for students and prospective students are ideal for this purpose.

GUIDELINE FOUR. **Institutions should clearly designate all optional charges as "optional" in all published schedules and related materials. Clearly, charges that are mandatory and charges that are optional must be plainly differentiated in all printed materials.** Also, the institution should state clearly in its schedule if a charge is optional for some students but required for others. Statements accompanying the schedule may include institutional endorsements of the optional program or service.

GUIDELINE FIVE. **Institutions should clearly identify charges and deposits that are nonrefundable as "nonrefundable" on all published schedules.** Institutions determine on an individual basis which of their charges are refundable or nonrefundable. In general, admissions fees, application fees, laboratory fees, facility and student activity fees, and other similar charges are not refundable. Such fees are generally charged to cover the costs of activities such as processing applications and other student information, reserving academic positions, and establishing the limits of institutional programs and services, reserving housing space, and otherwise setting the fixed costs of the institution for the coming academic period.

Institutions determine on an individual basis which of their deposits are refundable or nonrefundable. Some deposits will be nonrefundable or will be credited to a student's account (*e.g.*, tuition deposits). Others are refundable according to the terms of the deposit agreement (*e.g.*, deposits for breakage).

GUIDELINE SIX. **Institutions should refund housing rental charges, less a deposit, so long as written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that provides reasonable opportunity to make the space available to other students.** Written notification on or before the beginning of the term of the contract is necessary to ensure utilization of housing units. During the term of the contract, room charges are generally nonrefundable. However, based on the program offered, space availability, debt service requirements, state and local laws, and other individual circumstances, institutions may provide for some more flexible refund guideline for housing.

GUIDELINE SEVEN. **Institutions should refund board charges in full, less a deposit, if written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that falls on or before the beginning of the term of the contract. Subsequent board charges should be refunded on a *pro rata* basis less a withdrawal fee.** It is reasonable to make a refund for those goods and services not consumed. The withdrawal charge should reflect that portion of an institution's costs that are fixed for the term of the contract.

GUIDELINE EIGHT. **The institutional tuition refund policy for an academic period should include the following minimum guidelines:**

1. **The institution should refund 100 percent of the tuition charge, less a deposit fee, if written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that falls on or before the first day of classes.**

2. **The institution should refund at least 25 percent of the tuition charge, if written notification of withdrawal is made during the first 25 percent of the academic period.**

It is reasonable to refund tuition charges on a sliding scale if a student withdraws from his or her program prior to the end of the first 25 percent of the academic period unless state law imposes a more restrictive refund policy.

GUIDELINE NINE. **The institution should assess no penalty charges where the institution, as opposed to the student, is in error. The institution should make refunds in cases where the institution has assessed charges in error.** Penalty charges, such as those involving late registration fees, change of scheduled fees, late payment fees, should not be assessed if it is determined that the student is not responsible for the action causing the charge to be levied.

GUIDELINE TEN. **Institutions should advise students that any notifications of withdrawal or cancellation and requests for a refund must be in writing and addressed to the designated institutional officer.** A student's written notification of

withdrawal or cancellation and request for a refund provides an accurate record of transactions and also ensures that such requests will be processed on a timely basis. Acceptance of oral requests is an undesirable practice.

GUIDELINE ELEVEN. **Institutions should pay or credit refunds due on a timely basis.** The definition of "timely basis" should include the time required to process a formal student request for a refund, to process a check if required, and to allow for mail delivery, when necessary. If an institution has a policy that a refund of an inconsequential amount will not be made, such policy should be published as part of all materials related to refund policies.

GUIDELINE TWELVE. **Institutions should publicize, as a part of their dissemination of information on charges and refunds, that an appeals process exists for students or parents who feel that individual circumstances warrant exceptions from published policy. The informational materials should include the name, title, and address of the official responsible.** Although charges and refund policies should reflect extensive consideration of student and institutional needs, it will not be possible to encompass in these structures the variety of personal circumstances that may exist or develop. Institutions are required to provide a system of due process to their students, and charges and refund policies are legitimately a part of that process. Students and parents should be informed regularly of procedures for requesting information concerning exceptions to published policies.

American Council on Education
August 1979

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

OPERATIONAL POLICIES

Operational Policies adopted by WASC and the Commission apply to the organization of the Commission and the conduct of its business.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

(Adopted October 1964, Revised January 1978)

Each institution must be free to decide for itself whether or not to seek accreditation by any particular agency. If an institution desires both general (regional) accreditation and specialized program accreditation, the Commission may collaborate with the specialized accrediting agency in arranging joint visitations or exchange of information.

An institution should not interpret its general accreditation as validating a specialized program in the same manner as specialized accreditation, which by its very nature is a more intensive evaluation process.

A specialized institution may apply for regional accreditation through ACCJC if it meets the Commission's eligibility requirements.

Reviewed by ACCJC 1996

PUBLIC ACCESS POLICY

(Adopted June 1978)

Meetings of the Commission are open to the public, except when it is deliberating and acting on matters concerning specific individuals or institutions. Institutional representatives and other interested persons are invited to attend these meetings at which the Commission considers, among other matters, all questions of policy and procedure.

The Executive Director will mail a preliminary agenda 45 days before each regular meeting of the Commission to the chief executive officer and accreditation liaison officer of all candidate and accredited institutions approved by the Commission with the request that the agenda be posted or otherwise publicized.

Observers will be seated at Commission meetings as space allows. If they wish to speak, observers must give advance notice to the Executive Director and include the agenda item which they wish to address. Any specific reference to an individual or to an institution must be made in the Executive Session, and the individual or institution will be given an opportunity to be present or to have a representative present. Verbal participation by observers at Commission meetings is limited to:

1. Prepared statements noted by the Executive Director in the agenda at appropriate places. Written copies of all prepared remarks should be given to the Executive Director at the end of the statement.

2. Brief comments on specific points in the public agenda given at the end of Commission discussion of the same topic.

Individuals who wish to bring items to the attention of the Commission which are not on the agenda should present, not less than 30 days before Commission meetings, a written statement to the Executive Director with a request that said item(s) be placed on the agenda. If individuals wish to meet with members of the Commission, they should so advise the Executive Director not less than 30 days before the Commission meeting. The Executive Director will then, time constraints permitting, arrange for two Commissioners to meet with the individual(s) to discuss the matter(s) of concern preceding the meeting of the Commission. The two Commissioners will report to the Commission as a whole and may recommend a presentation before the full Commission at an appropriate time.

COORDINATING GUIDELINES
FOR THE WASC POSTSECONDARY ACCREDITING COMMISSIONS

1. Commission of Jurisdiction

   - For an institution which offers a combination of secondary and lower division college programs, the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges will assume jurisdiction, consulting with the Commission for Schools. ACCJC will also retain jurisdiction of institutions offering limited upper division work which does not lead to a degree.

   - For an institution which offers lower division programs but is adding one or more upper division baccalaureate degree programs and/or any graduate level work, the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities will assume jurisdiction, consulting with the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

2. Evaluation and Recognition

   - When an institution has been accredited or recognized as a candidate by the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and moves to a higher level, the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities will conduct an evaluation in cooperation with the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The Senior Commission standards and procedures will be used by the institution and the accrediting team.

   - The institution will continue to be listed under the original level. At such time as the total institution qualifies for recognition by a higher commission, it will come under that commission's jurisdiction. Generally, the institution has three years in which to effect a transfer.

Adopted by WASC Board of Directors, July 1988

Reviewed by ACCJC 1996

CODE OF COMMISSION GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATIONS WITH MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted June 1980, Revised June 1996)

In its relations with the institutions it accredits, the Commission is committed to:

1. Make an initial visit to, or evaluation of, an institution only on the written request of the chief executive officer of the institution.

2. Revisit an institution only on request by the chief executive officer, or, if a visit is initiated by the Commission, after due notice to the institution.

3. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial candidacy or initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action by the Commission.

4. Appraise institutions in the light of their own stated purposes so long as these are within the general frame of reference of postsecondary education and consistent with the standards of the Commission.

5. Use relevant qualitative and quantitative information in evaluation.

6. Interpret standards for accreditation in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity.

7. Encourage sound educational innovation.

8. Assist and stimulate improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.

9. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self study.

10. Publish annually in the newsletter the names of institutions scheduled for evaluation and specifically invite third party comment on the institutions.

11. Establish reporting systems for Annual, Midterm, and self study reports which inform the Commission regarding student loan default rates and the standing of the institution with respect to appropriate state agencies, institutional or specialized accrediting agencies.

12. Consider information regarding adverse actions against a member institution by another accrediting agency or state agency and provide an explanation consistent with accreditation standards why the action by another authority does not result in an adverse action.

13. Limit oversight required by Federal statute and regulations to issues expressly required by that mandate.

14. Include on evaluation teams representation from other institutions of similar purpose and academic program.

15. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for possible conflict of interest.

16. Arrange consultation during the visit with administration, staff, students, and trustees, and include a publicized opportunity for an open hearing during the visit.

17. Protect the confidentiality of the institutional self study and evaluation team report. An institution, at its discretion, may make such documents public. In event of a negative action, the Commission staff will attempt to reach agreement with the institution on a statement for public distribution, but the Commission reserves final authority in case of an impasse. Should the institution issue selective and biased releases or use the public forum to take issue with negative actions, the Commission and its staff will be free to make all the documents public.

18. Provide opportunity for the institution to respond in writing to the team report before it is completed, and to appear before the Commission when it is considered. The Commission staff will notify an institution in writing as soon as reasonably possible regarding Commission decisions.

19. Provide an opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend those portions of Commission meetings devoted to policy matters and others of a nonconfidential nature.

20. Encourage discussion and use on campus of major team recommendations.

21. Revoke accreditation only after advance written notice to the institution.

22. Provide opportunity for Commission review of its negative decisions, and, in addition, for appeal of decisions to deny or terminate candidacy to a panel established by the WASC Board.

23. **Refrain from conditioning candidacy or accreditation upon payment of fees for purposes other than annual fees and evaluation costs.**

24. **Encourage continuing close relationships and communication between the Commission and institutions through the establishment of liaison officer positions in each institution, with appropriate visibility and responsibility.**

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

(Adopted June 1980, Revised June 1996)

The Commission insists that its members recognize their ethical responsibilities by accepting and subscribing to the defined purposes of accreditation; respecting the confidentiality of relationships between the Commission and the institutions it accredits; refraining from discussing institutional matters learned through the accrediting process with anyone other than Commissioners, the staff, the visiting teams, and the institutions concerned; protecting the confidentiality of all documents that come from the staff in preparation for meetings, or that are distributed at meetings when these are clearly of a confidential nature; and committing themselves to full disclosure and restraint in any Commission consideration involving conflict of interest. Members of the Commission will absent themselves from any deliberation or vote on decisions regarding the individual institutions of which they are employees or trustees. They shall not participate in deliberation or vote on decisions in which they have any other personal interest that might reasonably appear to suggest divided loyalties or otherwise impair their independent, unbiased judgment. Any such potential conflict of interest shall be reported to the Commission by the commissioner in advance of deliberation and/or action and shall be recorded in the Commission minutes. Any commissioner who is uncertain regarding the possible appearance of conflict of interest shall request the Commission to determine the matter by majority vote. Such request and decision shall be duly noted in Commission minutes.

These restrictions are not intended to disqualify participation by a commissioner in the general run of cases which do not directly or substantially affect the institution with which he/she is associated or its competitive position with a neighboring institution under review.

The Commission expects that Commission members will accept and carry out the responsibilities of membership, including:

1. Attending, when possible, all Commission meetings for their entire duration.

2. Studying documents as assigned prior to the meetings and serving as readers by arrangement.

3. Voting according to best personal judgment in the light of existing policy.

4. Respecting the confidentiality of relations between the Commission and the institutions it accredits.

5. Assisting in interpreting accreditation.

6. On occasion accepting appointment to the Senior and the Schools Commissions, to the WASC Board, and to membership on evaluation teams.

7. Serving on *ad hoc* or permanent committees of the Commission.

8. Assisting the staff in training programs and other activities.

9. Resigning from the Commission if circumstances change so that time no longer permits carrying out the full responsibilities of membership.

10. Absenting themselves from deliberation or vote when a potential conflict of interest exists because of affiliation, previous relationships, or consultant services.

ACCREDITATION OF INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS

(Adopted October 1972, Revised June 1980, June 1985, June 1987)

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and the other regional commissions have historically accredited colleges or schools rather than districts or systems. In accord with this position, institutions which are under the general control of a parent institution or a central administration in a multi-unit system are classified as operationally separate and require separate accreditation if they:

1. Have an organizational structure which is not a part of another unit in the system and which includes a core of full-time faculty, a separate student body, and a resident administration.

2. Offer a program or programs leading to degrees.

Such institution's units will be listed separately in regional and national directories. The Commission reserves the right to make the final judgment on the determination of separate units.

Units classified as operationally separate which currently share the accreditation of a parent institution or system continue in that status until they can be examined. The Commission will schedule evaluations as soon as practicable. New, operationally separate units are expected to seek separate affiliation or accreditation.

Newly founded unaccredited units in multiple-campus systems and institutions, which merge or affiliate with an accredited institution, are not considered accredited if they are operationally separate as defined above. These institutions are expected to seek affiliation or accreditation through the usual procedures.

Programs not classified as operationally separate by the Commission are included in the Commission's evaluation of the parent institution, regardless of location. Commissions in other regions where such programs are located may be invited to send representatives. Branch campuses will be visited within six months of commencement of operations.

The above policies for the accreditation of operationally separate units apply to institutions located within the United States and in foreign countries.

Evaluation of Multi-Unit Systems*

In order to achieve a more effective evaluation of institutions which are part of multi-unit systems, the Commission will consider the following options:

1. Institutional evaluation with system office and board participation.

2. Evaluating all institutions simultaneously with system office and board participation.

3. Evaluating the institutions on a defined schedule within a single evaluation year with system office and board participation.

Systems desiring to use options two or three should, in consultation with the Commission Executive Director, develop a proposal which meets the following criteria:

1. Faculty and support staff from the operating unit are involved in developing the proposal.

2. The self study process involves broad participation by the various constituencies in the evaluation and planning activities.

3. The governing board of the system approves the proposal by resolution.

In addition, requests for a separate evaluation of the system are encouraged.

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*If a system headquarters desires a separate evaluation of its operations, a request should be submitted to the Executive Director. The fee for this evaluation will be based on actual costs.

STUDENT AND PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted June 1972, Revised January 1984, January 1993)

Accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges is an expression of confidence that an institution is satisfactorily achieving its objectives and that it meets or exceeds the Commission's standards of quality, integrity, and effectiveness. The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with Commission standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, the Commission can and does respond to complaints regarding allegations of conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions about the institution's compliance with the standards of conduct expected of an accredited institution.

The Commission does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with its affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances between students, faculty, or members of the public and individual institutions. The Commission will not act as a court of appeal in matters of admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, grades, fees, student financial aid, student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, and dismissals or similar matters. If the complainant has instituted litigation against the institution, no action will be taken by the Commission while the matter is under judicial consideration.

Complaints are considered only when made in writing and when the complainant is clearly identified. Substantial evidence should be included in support of the allegation that the institution is in significant violation of the rules of good practice as stated in the Commission's criteria, standards, and policies. Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts. The Commission requires that each affiliated institution have in place student grievance and public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. The complainant should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

When the Commission receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with Commission standards. If appropriate, such information may be referred to the institution or to the visiting team next scheduled to evaluate the institution. The Commission at all times reserves the right to request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding

consistent with Commission policy. A pattern of concern which may evidence a significant lack of compliance with standards could cause the Commission to renew its consideration of the matter for whatever action may be appropriate. If information is received raising issues of institutional integrity, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy.

Note: California Education Code Section 94332 requires that complaints filed against WASC-affiliated private institutions in California with the Council for Private Postsecondary Institutions be forwarded to WASC for review.

Procedures

1. Within ten days of the receipt of a complaint, it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

   It is the complainant's responsibility to do the following:

   a. State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.

   b. Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.

   c. Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeals hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant should describe what has been done in this regard.

   d. Attest that the matter in question is not under litigation.

   e. Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the president of the institution.

   f. Sign the complaint.

2. If the Executive Director finds the complaint to be not within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, the complainant will be so notified. Individual complaints, whether acted upon or not by the Commission, will be retained in Commission files.

3. If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution's chief executive, who will be asked to respond to the Executive Director within thirty days. The Executive Director will send a copy of the complaint and correspondence to the chairperson of the Accrediting Commission.

4. The Commission staff will review the complaint, the response, and evidence submitted by the institution's president, and will determine one of the following:

   a. That the complaint will not be processed further.

   b. That the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation (which may include referral to the Commission).

   Although every effort will be made to expedite this final decision, it is not possible to guarantee a specific time frame in which the process will be completed. If further investigation is warranted, the time required to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint.

5. The complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the review of the complaint.

   a. If the complaint is investigated further, as in 4.b above, the complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

      Prior to the Commission's disposition of the complaint, the institution will have an opportunity to respond in writing within thirty days to the findings of the investigation. The complainant and the institution involved will be notified of the decision. The decision as communicated by the Executive Director is final.

   b. If the complaint was referred to ACCJC by another agency, that agency will receive copies of correspondence that state the outcome of the complaint.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

(Adopted October 1972, Revised January 1978, June 1991, June 1996)

Introduction

The accreditation of an institution is in part an affirmation that the institution has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized and that it appears, in fact, to be accomplishing them. Accreditation rests on the integrity with which institutions conduct their educational endeavors and the orderly procedures they have established for insuring the quality of those endeavors. When an institution is accredited, or its accreditation is reaffirmed, it is accredited for conditions existing at the time of that action by the Commission. Because institutions are in continual processes of change, the Commission requires that all institutions be reevaluated periodically.

Most changes, such as adding or dropping courses, developing new concentrations that are allied with existing offerings, and changing personnel, are not substantive and fall within the nature and scope of the institution as it was last evaluated. Special programs, off-campus educational activities, or new degree levels may extend learning opportunities to a variety of populations, some otherwise not served. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges seeks neither to inhibit such activities nor to diminish creative approaches to them. Sometimes, however, an institution plans a change between evaluations which is a substantive change; that is, a change which alters the objectives or the scope of the institution; changes the autonomy, sponsorship, or form of control of the institution; modifies the nature of the constituencies it seeks to serve; or changes the geographic area(s) served.

While the decision to modify an institution is an institutional prerogative and responsibility, the Commission is obligated to determine the effect of the substantive change on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the total institution. Substantive changes in an institution are subject to review by the Commission both prior to and subsequent to implementation. Substantive changes are not automatically covered by the institution's accreditation or candidate status and may precipitate a review of the accredited status of the institution. A principle of institutional accreditation is that everything done in the name of the institution is covered by its accreditation. Conversely, anything done without appropriate concern for consistency with an institution's stated mission and concern for quality and integrity threatens the accredited status of the entire institution.

Notification

An institution considering a substantive change is urged to contact the Commission staff early in its deliberations. Early notification enables the staff to provide information and advice about the effect of the proposed change on the accreditation or candidate status of the institution. Institutions proposing substantive changes should send a letter to the Commission describing the proposed change, the need for the change, and the anticipated effects. Commission staff will review the proposal to determine whether or not it is indeed substantive. Size, complexity, maturity, and experience of the institution are important factors. What might be a minor change for one institution may well be viewed as a major change for another institution.

Commission Action

If the Commission staff determines that the proposed change is substantive in nature, the institution will be asked to submit a more detailed statement for review by the Commission's Committee on Substantive Change. The Committee may approve the change or refer the change to the Commission for action at either the January or June meeting. The Substantive Change Report should include the following:

1. A concise statement of the proposed change and the reasons for it. The statement should include a description of the planning process which led to the request for the change, how the change relates to the institution's stated mission, and the assessment of needs and resources which has taken place.

2. Evidence that the institution has any necessary internal or external approvals. The statement should state clearly what faculty, administrative, governing board, or regulatory agency approvals are needed and provide evidence that any legal requirements have been met.

3. Evidence that the educational purposes of the change are clear and appropriate. Institutions should provide evidence that all accreditation standards are fulfilled by the change and that all relevant Commission policies are addressed.

4. An analysis of the anticipated effect of the proposed change on the rest of the institution. The institution should address whether or not the proposed change will have an effect on the ability of the institution to continue to be able to meet the Eligibility Requirements and, therefore, continued accreditation status.

5. Evidence that the institution has provided adequate human, financial, and physical resources and processes to initiate, maintain, and monitor the change and to assure that the activities undertaken are accomplished with acceptable quality.

6. Other information requested by Commission staff that is pertinent to the specific nature of the change.

A candidate or accredited institution is expected to complete this process sufficiently in advance of a substantive change to permit approval before the change is instituted. In the event that the change is judged to be of such magnitude as to potentially affect the accredited status of the institution, the review process may be expanded to include a review of the accreditation of the institution.

Substantive changes which are approved by the Commission should be included in the next institutional self study and will be included as part of the next periodic review of the institution. If the institution is not due for a comprehensive evaluation within two years of the approval of the substantive change, an on-site evaluation, or such other measures as the Commission may determine, may be required. Costs for an on-site evaluation will be borne by the institution. (Note: Certain off-campus centers will be subject to an on-site inspection within the first six months following establishment.)

Examples of Substantive Change

A substantive change in a candidate or accredited institution is one which may significantly affect its nature, quality, objectives, scope, or control. Examples of substantive changes subject to prior review and approval by the Commission include:

1. Changing an institution's private or public character, including changes in the denominational character of a religiously-affiliated institution.

2. Changing sponsorship or form of control, including change of ownership of a proprietary institution.

3. Merging with another institution.

4. Offering courses or programs outside the geographic region served by the institution at the time of the previous evaluation or outside the WASC region, including international sites.

5. Move to a new location or establishment of major off-campus units.

6. Offering programs at a degree level different from that listed for the institution in the WASC Directory. (An institution planning to offer the baccalaureate degree will fall under the jurisdiction of the WASC Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, requiring accreditation by that Commission. Consultation with Commission staff should begin early in the planning process.)

7. Contracting with a non-regionally accredited organization for the organization to provide courses or programs on behalf of the candidate or accredited institution.

8. Change in educational purposes and/or programs operative at the time of the most recent evaluation, including changes in constituencies or clientele.

Note: Institutions undergoing changes in ownership, control and/or legal status will be visited within six months of the implementation of the change. The Commission reserves the right to request a report and visit to assess the effects of any substantive change it deems to be a very significant departure from the past.

COMMISSION ACTIONS ON INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted January 1977, Revised January 1979, January 1991)

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional documents (catalog and schedule), the institutional self study, the evaluation team report, and documents from previous evaluations. The Commission will apply, as it deems appropriate, one of the following actions in each case.

I. Actions on Candidate Institutions

- Grant Candidacy. Candidacy is a pre-accreditation status, initially awarded for two years. (See page 6, 1996 Handbook of Accreditation.) Candidate status will be granted only to institutions that demonstrate the ability and will to meet the Standards for Accreditation within the candidate period.

- Extend Candidacy. Candidacy is renewed for two years. (Six years in candidate status is maximum available.)

- Defer a decision on candidacy pending receipt of specified information from the institution.

- Deny Candidacy. The institution may reapply for candidacy by submitting a self study after two years.

- Termination of Candidacy. If, in the opinion of the Commission, an institution has not maintained its eligibility for candidacy or has failed to explain or correct deficiencies of which it has been given notice, the candidacy of the institution may be terminated. Termination may be subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies.

II. Actions on Initial Accreditation

- Grant initial accreditation. The institution must be fully evaluated again within a maximum of six years from the date of the Commission action.

- Grant initial accreditation with a request for a follow-up report and/or a visit within a limited time. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made.

- Defer a decision on accreditation pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time.

  Note: Each accredited institution submits a Midterm Report of responses to recommendations three years after each comprehensive evaluation visit. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. If the institution is a candidate for accreditation, candidacy continues during the period of deferment.

- Denial of accreditation. A denial is a final decision which is subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies. A candidate institution may be permitted to remain in candidate status until it is ready for a new evaluation within a limited period of time. In cases where the six-year limit on candidacy has been reached, the Commission may consider extending the limit in special circumstances. If an extension is not granted, the institution may not reapply for candidacy for at least two years.

III. Actions on Accredited Institutions

- Reaffirmation of accreditation without conditions.

- Reaffirmation of accreditation, with a request for a follow-up report to be submitted by a specific date.

- Reaffirmation of accreditation, to be followed by a special visit. In such cases, the Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of any further information to be submitted by the institution and of the visit to be made.

- Deferment of a decision on accreditation pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time. The report is usually followed by a visit addressed primarily to the reasons for the decision. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose,

and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of deferment.

- Warning. When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards, or policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission, it may issue a warning to the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities within a stated period of time. The accreditation status of the institution continues during the warning period.

- Probation. When a candidate or accredited institution fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning, or when it deviates significantly from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards, or policies but not to such an extent as to warrant a show cause order or the termination of candidacy or accreditation, it may be placed on probation for a specified period of time. While on probation, the institution will be subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, including a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and special visit(s) by representatives of the Commission. If the institution has not taken steps satisfactory to the Commission to remove the cause or causes for its probation at the end of the specified time, the Commission will issue a show cause order. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period.

- Show Cause. When the Commission finds an institution to be in substantial non-compliance with its criteria or policies or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission, the Commission may require the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period. In such cases, the burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. While under a show cause order, the institution will be subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, including a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and special visit(s) by representatives of the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the show cause order.

- Termination of Accreditation. If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice, its accreditation may be terminated. In such a case, the institution must complete again the entire accreditation process to qualify for candidacy or accreditation. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and

procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The accredited status of the institution continues pending completion of any review appeal process the institution may request. Otherwise, the institution's accreditation ends on the date when the time period permitting such a request expires.

In all cases of negative action, the Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision.

The Commission will announce publicly, as appropriate, through its Executive Director and will publish in appropriate publications and in the WASC annual Directory the status of each institution subject to a negative action (except warning) in accordance with the Commission's policy on "Disclosure and Confidentiality of Information." The Executive Director will attempt to reach agreement with the institution on a public statement to be used by both parties. However, the Commission reserves final authority in event of impasse.

If a specific inquiry is made about an institution which has been warned, placed on probation, or issued a show cause order, the Executive Director shall inform the inquirer that a negative action has been taken and the reasons therefore.

If an institution so conducts its affairs that they become a matter of public concern, or uses the public forum to take issue with a negative action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission may announce, through the Executive Director, the action taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to it.

REVIEW OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

(Adopted January 1977, Revised January 1979)

Institutions whose applications for candidacy, renewal of candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation are denied, or whose candidacy or accreditation is terminated by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, may request a review of the Commission's decision. Such a review must be requested prior to filing of an appeal by the institution to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The following procedures will govern the conduct of the Commission's review:

1. If the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges decides to take any of the actions listed above, its Executive Director will notify the institution concerned of the decision by certified mail, return receipt requested, within approximately seven calendar days of the Commission's decision. Said notification shall contain a succinct statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision.

2. If the institution wishes a review by the Commission, it shall file with the Executive Director a request for such a review under the policies and procedures of the Commission. This request should be submitted by the chief executive officer of the institution and, in the case of private institutions, co-signed by the chairperson of the governing board. Requests for review by an institution in a multi-college system shall be co-signed by the chief executive officer of the system. This request must be received by certified mail, return receipt requested, within twenty-eight calendar days of the date of the mailing of the Commission's notification of its decision to the institution.

3. Within twenty-one calendar days after the date of its request for a review, the institution, through its chief administrative officer, must submit a written statement of the reasons why, in the institution's opinion, a review of the Commission's decision is warranted. As a general rule, this written statement should respond only to the Commission's statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision and to the evidence that was before the Commission at the time of its decision. However, if the institution believes that there are compelling reasons to expand the scope of the response, or if it wishes to introduce new evidence which may have been generated or discovered since the time of the Commission's decision, it may do so in a separate section of its response.

4. On receipt of the institution's written statement referred to in paragraph 3, the chairperson of the Commission will select a review committee of three or more persons. A roster of the review committee will be sent to the institution normally within twenty-one calendar days of the date of the Commission's receipt of the institution's written statement.

5. Within a reasonable period of time after the review committee has been selected, the Executive Director will schedule a visit to the institution by the review committee.

6. Prior to the visit to the institution, the review committee will review available information. If additional information is needed, the chairperson of the review committee may request such information from the chief executive officer of the institution.

7. The review visit will be investigative and designed to determine if the Commission's decision was substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of the Commission's decision. If, however, in the judgment of the review committee, changes have occurred which might materially affect the decision of the Commission, the review committee chairperson, with the approval of the members, may accept new evidence bearing on these changes.

8. The committee should open and close its visit with a meeting with the chief executive officer of the institution. At the closing meeting the chairperson should, among other matters, attempt to ascertain whether or not the institution has any complaints about any aspect of the visit.

9. The committee should prepare a report which cites and evaluates the evidence which the committee considers relevant to the question of whether the Commission's original decision was substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of its decision. If the committee accepts evidence of changes which occurred subsequent to the committee's original decision, the review committee should include a summary and analysis of such evidence in its report identifying it as new evidence and describing the weight given it.

10. The chairperson of the review committee will submit a copy of the committee's report, which is referred to in paragraph 9, to the chief executive officer of the institution, the chairperson of the institution's governing board, and the Executive Director of the Commission, normally within twenty-one calendar days of the end of the review committee's visit.

11. Within fourteen calendar days of the institution's receipt of the review committee's report, the chief executive officer may submit a written response to the Executive Director of the Commission, with a copy to the chairperson of the review committee. Failure of the institution to submit a response shall constitute an acceptance by the institution of the Commission's original decision.

12. In a confidential letter to the Commission, the review committee shall make one of the following recommendations:

    a. The decision of the Commission was substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of the Commission's decision.

    b. The decision of the Commission was not substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of the Commission's decision.

    c. The decision of the Commission was substantially supported by the evidence available at the time of the Commission's decision; but the institution has taken significant steps to improve conditions and remedy deficiencies, and the Commission should reevaluate its decision in light of these steps.

    The recommendation of the review committee to the Commission shall not be disclosed to the institution being reviewed. The recommendation is not binding on the Commission.

13. The chief executive officer of the institution and a limited number of the staff will be invited to meet with the two readers of the committee's report and the chairperson of the review committee shortly before the meeting of the Commission at which the report will be acted upon. Discussion at this preliminary meeting will be confined to the report of the review committee referred to in section 9 and the institution's response to this report.

14. The two readers will report the substance of this meeting to the Commission when it meets. If institutional representatives wish to appear before the Commission at that time, their request will be granted; but the meeting with the readers is intended to obviate the need for such an appearance except in unusual circumstances.

15. In making its decision on the institution's status, the Commission will consider the evidence available to it and then reach a final decision to (a) reaffirm its original decision; (b) modify it; or (c) reverse it. As soon after the meeting as practicable, the Executive Director will notify the chief executive officer of the institution by certified mail of the Commission's decision.

16. The decision of the Commission, referred to in paragraph 15, shall be final as far as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is concerned. However, if the institution remains aggrieved, it may file an appeal with the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges through the Executive Director of the Commission in accordance with the provisions of Article VI of the Constitution of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

17. An institution retains its accredited or candidate status until the review process of the Commission is completed. If the institution files a subsequent appeal with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, its status remains unchanged until that appeal has been heard and decided.

18. The cost of the review will be borne by the institution. The request for a review must be accompanied by a deposit set by the Commission. If the actual cost is less than this amount, the excess will be refunded. If it is greater, the institution will be billed for the difference.

DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

(Adopted January 1976, Revised June 1978, June 1996)

It is the obligation of every institution applying for candidacy, extension of candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation, and of every candidate or accredited institution to provide the Commission with access to all parts of its operations, with due regard for the rights of individual privacy, and with complete and accurate information with respect to the institution's affairs, including reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Commission will maintain inviolate the confidentiality of information supplied by the institution except in those rare cases where it is deemed necessary by the Commission to make public information which forms a substantive basis for the Commission's decision.

The Commission may announce publicly, as appropriate, through its Executive Director and will publish in the WASC Bulletin and/or annual Directory the fact that:

1. The institution's application for candidacy or accreditation has been denied.

2. An institution has been granted candidacy or accredited.

3. The institution's candidacy has not been extended or its accreditation reaffirmed.

4. The institution has been placed on probation.

5. The institution has been given a show cause order effective at a specific date.

6. The institution's candidacy has not been renewed or its accreditation has been terminated.

If an institution so conducts its affairs that they become a matter of public concern, the Commission may announce, through its Executive Director, any action the Commission has taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to it.

POLICY REGARDING MATTERS UNDER LITIGATION

(Adopted January 1989, Revised June 1996)

It is the policy of the Accrediting Commission not to become involved in litigation within an institution. The Commission is not an adjudicatory agency, and it is not the role or function of the Commission to arrive at any determination regarding the merits of any aspect of pending litigation. The Commission's concerns are to determine whether an institution is in compliance with Commission standards and to assist institutions, through established procedures, in the improvement of quality.

Because of the sensitivities created when litigation is pending during a site visit by an evaluation team, the Commission has developed the following guidelines.

Responsibility of the Institution

It is the responsibility of the institution to inform the Commission staff, prior to a visit, of any pending litigation against the institution. The staff will consult with the liaison officer to determine if any special advice will need to be provided to the team chair.

Responsibility of Visiting Teams

Visiting teams should not comment on pending litigation in such a way as to express an opinion about the merits of the lawsuit or its outcome. Team members are not precluded from meeting with individuals involved in litigation and hearing from them regarding the litigation. If such a meeting is held, or if the subject of the litigation arises during the course of interviews, the institution will be informed. Team members are cautioned against saying or writing anything which may be used by either party in support of their positions in the lawsuit.

If questions arise prior to, during, or after a visit, Commission staff should be consulted.

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

(Adopted June 1996)

The Commission has sought recognition and periodically seeks renewal of recognition by the Secretary of Education in order that member institutions achieve and maintain eligibility to participate in programs such as HEA Title IV student financial aid.

The Commission notifies the Department of Education, and relevant state agencies, of all institutional actions immediately following the meeting at which action is taken.

Copies of publications such as the Commission Newsletter and the WASC Directory are routinely sent to the state and federal agencies with which the Commission communicates.

The Commission maintains regular communication with the Department of Education and relevant state agencies. It responds to inquiries from government agencies and forwards responses to complaints against institutions that have been routed to the Commission by those agencies.

In the event clear evidence of Title IV fraud and abuse is obtained by the Commission, that information is forwarded to the Department of Education.

Institutions are notified and asked to respond if complaints or allegations of fraud and abuse are communicated to the Commission by the Department of Education.

THE FEDERALLY-MANDATED UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION

(Adopted June 1996)

The Commission may conduct unannounced inspections of institutions offering pre-baccalaureate vocational programs as defined by the Secretary of Education. The Higher Education Amendments of 1992 required that unannounced inspections be conducted to protect against the possibility that institutions might create a facade to deceive accreditors. Such visits shall be for the purposes required by the Secretary, to determine "whether the institution has the personnel, facilities, and resources it claimed to have during its previous on-site reviews or in subsequent reports to the agency."

The inspection may be conducted by Commission staff, or by one or more individuals selected from the Commission's pool of evaluators.

A written record shall be made stating the identity of the visitor, the date and time of the visit, and the findings of the inspection. The report will be retained by the Commission and made available to the Department of Education upon request.

The Commission shall not take accrediting actions on the basis of the unannounced inspection. However, if the unannounced inspection raises an issue of concern, the Commission may address the matter through its regular processes.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

(Adopted June 1996)

The Accrediting Commission conducts systematic study of the utility, effectiveness, relevance and consistency of its standards and practices.

Independent research shall be commissioned prior to issuance of each edition of the Handbook of Accreditation, so that the revision may be informed by the findings of that research. Each such project shall include a survey of member institutions and participants in the processes of accreditation. Through a variety of means, information shall be sought to establish:

1. Institutional attitudes about validity and utility of standards.

2. Consistency of application of standards.

3. Consistency of application of the "Commission Actions on Institutions Policy."

4. Trust in the evaluation team and Commission action processes.

5. Effects of Commission actions and team recommendations on institutional practices.

6. Detailed knowledge of the state of the art of institutional evaluation, as practiced by academic quality assurance and accrediting agencies, and by business and industry.

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE

(Adopted January 1985, Revised January 1988, January 1992, June 1992)

Commission Membership

Commissioners other than state system representatives are appointed for overlapping three-year terms in accordance with WASC Constitution, Article III, Section 3b. Appointments are limited to two three-year terms unless the person is elected an officer, in which case an additional three-year term may be served. Regular appointments are effective on July 1 of the first year and end on June 30 of the last year of their term.

A Commissioner appointed to a membership category defined by position or status is expected to maintain that status for the entire term. If the Commissioner's position or status changes during a term so that the Commissioner no longer meets the requirement for the category to which appointed, the Commissioner shall notify the Commission's chairperson or Executive Director in a timely manner. A Commissioner whose status has so changed is considered to have completed the term on the date that the new status is actually assumed.

Commission Officers

The officers shall consist of a chairperson and a vice chairperson elected annually by the Commission. The term of office is limited to two years. The vice chairperson shall represent a different constituency from the chairperson and shall serve as chair-elect. Officers shall be elected from Commissioners serving three-year terms.

Conflict of Interest

Commissioners shall absent themselves from the meeting when an institution with which they have any formal relationship is under review.

Commissioners who have participated as a team member in an institutional evaluation may take part in the Commission review but shall not participate in the vote.

Appointment Procedure

Vacancies Noted

The Executive Director shall inform the Commission at the winter meeting about terms of office due to expire at the end of the following June. In February a letter

will be sent by the Director to chief executive officers, accreditation liaison officers, and district and local academic senate presidents of member institutions, to major organizations, and to individuals known to be interested. The letter shall announce vacant positions on the Commission and will indicate those positions occupied by Commissioners eligible for reappointment. Institutional and organizational representatives may submit nominations, and individuals may also submit applications. The notice will be distributed to organizations for inclusion in their publications. Applications are considered to be in effect for one year.

All applicants and nominees will be asked to submit the following by the published deadline (ordinarily in late April):

1. A letter of application, stating their interest in the Commission.

2. A completed ACCJC data form.

3. Optional - a professional resume and/or letter of recommendation.

Selection Committee

Appointments for Terms Beginning July 1

The Selection Committee, established pursuant to Section 3b of the WASC Constitution, shall meet to consider nominees and applicants and to make appointments to the Commission.

The chairperson of the Commission shall designate a member of the Selection Committee to serve as its chair.

The Executive Director shall serve as the nonvoting secretary of the Selection Committee.

Appointments Out of Normal Sequence

If a vacancy occurs after the meeting of the Selection Committee and before the winter Commission meeting, the Selection Committee will review the pool of applicants and nominations. If the Selection Committee determines that there is adequate representativeness in the pool, it will proceed with the appointments. If it determines that the pool is not adequate, the vacancy will be announced according to the process describe above.

PART IV

APPENDIX

Accreditation Agencies and Related Organizations

1. Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional accrediting associations that cover the United States, whose purpose is continual improvement of education and cooperation among educational institutions and agencies.

WASC was formed July 1, 1962 for the purpose of evaluation and accreditation of schools, colleges, and universities in California, Hawaii, and Pacific Island areas.

WASC functions through a board of directors and three accrediting commissions. The Board of Directors consists of nine members, three of whom are elected by each of the WASC commissions. The Board annually elects one of its members to be chairperson of the Board and president of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It also elects a Secretary-Treasurer, who is usually the executive director of one of the three accrediting commissions.

The Board of Directors and the Secretary-Treasurer are responsible for the annual publication of the WASC Directory, which lists WASC-accredited and candidate institutions.

Each commission develops its own standards, procedures, and fiscal policies under the authority of, and subject to, the approval of the WASC Board of Directors.

Those institutions which have been evaluated by commissions and have received approval are accredited by WASC. Any such accreditation shall cease whenever an institution is dropped from the accredited list of the association, or fails to pay its annual fees, or requests in writing that its accreditation be terminated.

The WASC office is located at 533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200, Burlingame, CA 94010. Telephone (415) 344-4805, FAX (415) 375-7790. The WASC office is administrated by Donald G. Haught, Secretary-Treasurer.

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*For the list of WASC candidate and accredited institutions, see the official WASC Directory.

The three accrediting commissions of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges are:

a. Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

Ralph A. Wolff, Executive Director. The Commission maintains an office on the campus of Mills College. The mailing address is P.O. Box 9990, Oakland, California 94613. The telephone number is (510) 632-5000.

b. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

David B. Wolf, Executive Director. The Commission office is located at 3402 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. The telephone number is 707-569-9177.

c. Accrediting Commission for Schools

Donald G. Haught, Executive Director. The Commission office is located at 533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200, Burlingame, California 94010. The telephone number is (415) 696-1060.

2. Other Regional Commissions in the United States

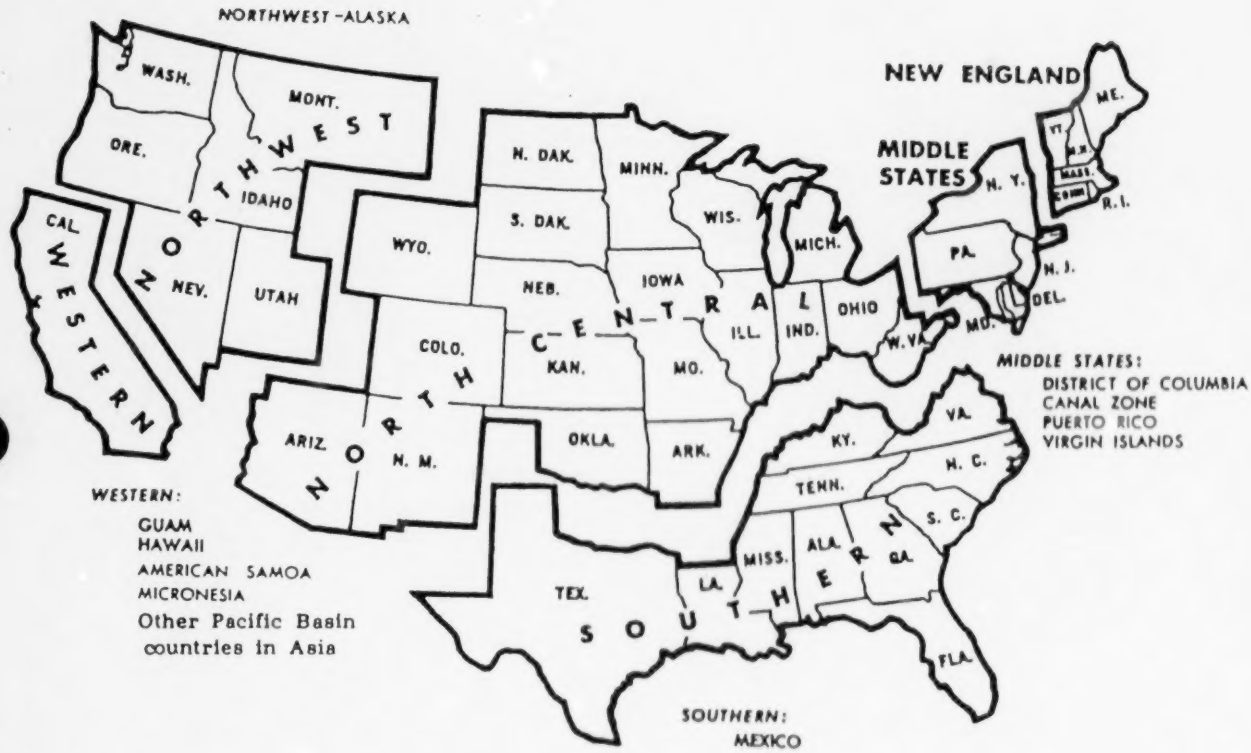
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. Telephone (215) 662-5606. Executive Director, Jean Avnet Morse.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Charles M. Cook, Director; Commission on Vocational, Technical, Career Institutions, Richard E. Mandeville, Director, 209 Burlington Road, Bedford, Massachusetts 01730. Telephone (617) 271-0022.

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois 60602. Telephone (312) 263-0456, (800) 621-7440. Executive Director, Patricia A. Thrash.

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Colleges, 3700-B University Way, N.E., Seattle, Washington 98105. Telephone (206) 543-0195. Executive Director, Sandra Elman.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033. Telephone (404) 679-4500. Executive Director, James T. Rogers.



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REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

CONSTITUTION

(Amended July 1994)

ARTICLE I. Name and Purpose

This organization shall be entitled WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES. Its purpose is to promote the welfare, interests, and development of elementary, secondary, and higher education through (1) improvement of educational programs, (2) close cooperation among the schools, colleges, and universities within the territory it undertakes to serve, (3) certification of accreditation or candidacy status, and (4) effective working relationships with other educational organizations and accrediting agencies.

ARTICLE II. Accrediting Region and Certification

Section 1. The accrediting region of the Association consists of the states of California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands, the Pacific Basin, and East Asia, and areas of the Pacific and East Asia where American-International schools or colleges may apply, and such other areas as may apply to it for service, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

Section 2. Any university, college, or school shall be certified by the Board of Directors as a candidate or accredited institution upon report of action taken by the appropriate Accrediting Commission. Any such certification shall cease whenever an institution resigns, is dropped from the accredited or candidate list of the Association, or fails to pay its annual fees by the date set by the appropriate Accrediting Commission for payment.

ARTICLE III. Organization

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of nine persons, three to be selected for staggered three-year terms from and by each of the three Accrediting Commissions hereinafter named and described. One of each Commission's

appointees shall be its Chair or Assistant/Vice Chair. The Board shall elect its Chair from among its members for a one-year term. The Chair may be re-elected for one additional one-year term, but may not serve more than two such terms in succession. The Chair of the Board shall be the President of the Association. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Association shall be selected by the Board.

Section 2. The Board of Directors shall meet annually at such time as may be determined by the Board, and may hold other meetings at the call of the Chair or on the request of any three members of the Board of Directors.

Section 3. There shall be three accrediting Commissions, as follows:

a. Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities.

This Commission shall consist of members appointed for overlapping three-year terms by the Western College Association, one of whom shall be named Chair. One member shall be appointed from either the present or former Commission membership by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. One member shall be appointed from either the present or former Commission membership by the Accrediting Commission for Schools. The Pacific Basin, the Northwest region, and the general public shall also be represented. The President of the Western College Association shall be an *ex officio* member.

Nominations for members of the Commission shall be solicited from member institutions by a Nominating Committee, appointed by the Western College Association Executive Committee and composed of: the President Elect of the Western College Association, the Chair of the Commission, the Western College Association Executive Secretary-Treasurer, and faculty, administrative, and public representatives. The Executive Committee shall ensure that there is a balance on the Nominating Committee among public and independent institutions.

Members of the Commission shall be allowed to complete their terms upon retirement from their institutions. Non-public Commissioners who lose their institutional base for any reason or who move out of the WASC region or the Northwest region, in the case of members appointed from that region, shall be ineligible to serve beyond the end of the academic year.

b. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

This Commission shall consist of seventeen members. The Chancellor for California Community Colleges and the President of the University of Hawaii shall each appoint one member. The Accrediting Commission for

Senior Colleges and Universities and the Accrediting Commission for Schools shall each appoint a present or former member from their respective commissions. The remaining members, selected for overlapping three-year terms, shall be named by a special Selection Committee. At least five of the appointments shall be faculty; at least three of the appointments shall represent the public interest; at least one of the appointments shall represent the independent institutions; one shall represent institutions in the Pacific Basin.

The Selection Committee shall consist of six members, two of whom shall be faculty, two administrators, and two public. The Commission Chair shall appoint two of these members from the Commission, one of whom shall chair the Committee. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the California Chief Executive Officers, and the California Community College Trustees shall appoint respectively whatever additional faculty, administrative, and public members are required to complete the composition of the six-member committee. The Committee shall be constituted in the spring of each year.

c. Accrediting Commission for Schools.

This Commission shall consist of twenty-five persons selected for staggered three-year terms. Public school representatives shall be appointed as follows: Seven by the Association of California School Administrators (including representation from the district office level and school-site level); one by the California Teachers' Association; one by the California Federation of Teachers; one by the California Department of Education; one by the Hawaii State Department of Education; one by the Hawaii Government Employees' Association; one by the California Association of Independent Schools; one by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools; one by the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools; three by the Western Catholic Educational Association, one of whom must be a practicing classroom teacher; one by the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; one practicing classroom teacher on a rotational basis from the Hawaii, Pacific Islands, EARCOS region; one practicing classroom teacher from the California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO); one school board member by the California School Boards' Association; one parent by the California Congress of Parents and Teachers. The Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges may each appoint one currently sitting member of the respective Commission to serve as liaison to the Schools Commission. The Commission shall elect its own Chair.

If a change of status, which affects eligibility for constituency appointments of any of the above appointees occurs during the term of office, the individual may at the discretion of the appointing agency, serve the remainder of the term or may be replaced. A person completing a term after a change of status may not be reappointed.

Section 4. The Executive Director of each Accrediting Commission shall be appointed by the Commission. Changes in the size and composition of each Accrediting Commission may be made by the Commission with the approval of the Board of Directors. The composition of each Accrediting Commission shall be published in the annual Directory of the Association.

Section 5. Recognizing that the Board of Directors retains ultimate authority over administrative structures, budgets, fiscal policies, contracts and leases, including those entered into by the Accrediting Commissions, the Board may delegate actual management over such matters, including the actual review and approval of such matters, to the Commissions to the extent it deems prudent.

Section 6. Action taken by any Commission to deny or withdraw accreditation or candidacy shall be reported in writing to the WASC Board at its annual meeting.

ARTICLE IV. Criteria for Certification

Section 1. Each of the Accrediting Commissions shall adopt its own criteria, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors of the Association. The criteria shall provide for the evaluation of each institution on the basis of the degree to which it is accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in its own statement of objectives, and on the appropriateness of those purposes and functions for an institution of its type.

Section 2. The actions by each Accrediting Commission, subject to its review procedures and the appeals procedures provided for in Article VI, shall be final and shall be certified by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE V. Duties of Officers

Section 1. The Chair of the Board of Directors shall preside at all meetings of the Board and shall have the right to vote on all issues that come before the Board for decision. As President of the Association, he/she shall be the official spokesperson for the Association, representing the Association in accord with policies established by each of the three Accrediting Commissions and the Board.

Section 2. The Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as the Secretary of the Board of Directors and shall maintain a complete file of minutes and Board decisions. He/she shall receive from the Directors of the three Accrediting Commissions the lists of accredited and candidate institutions and shall provide for the publication of a total Association list of accredited and candidate institutions at least once each year.

Section 3. The Director of each of the three Accrediting Commissions shall maintain a careful record of the actions and decisions of the Commission, shall be responsible under the Commission's direction for the scheduling of accreditation visits, appointment of visiting committees, distribution of necessary accreditation materials, and for such other matters as the Commission may delegate to the Director for the effective administration of the Accreditation program. Following each meeting of the Commission at which accreditation decisions are made, the Director shall promptly notify the Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Directors of all changes in the list of accredited and candidate institutions. At its annual meeting the Board of Directors shall certify the list of accredited and candidate institutions submitted by each Accrediting Commission.

ARTICLE VI. Appeals

Section 1. The WASC Board of Directors shall elect annually a WASC Hearing Panel from which shall be selected a Hearing Board established for the purpose of deciding appeals by any institution against the decision of any of the WASC Commissions denying or terminating accreditation or candidacy. This Panel shall consist of twenty persons as follows: (1) five from elementary/secondary schools; (2) five from junior or community colleges; (3) five from senior colleges and universities; and (4) five lay members of governing boards. None of the twenty shall be a current member of an Accrediting Commission.

a. The Hearing Board shall consist of five persons, including at least one person from each of the above categories, selected on random basis from the Hearing Panel and appointed, after such selection, by the WASC President. None of those selected shall have been involved in the accreditation process which resulted in the appeal. The Hearing Board shall elect its Chair from its own membership. Each member, including the Chair, shall have one vote.

b. Hearing Board members to replace those who are absent or have a conflict of interest shall be selected on the same random basis and appointed by the WASC President from the remaining members of the Hearing Panel.

Section 2. Costs. An institution making an appeal shall assume all necessary costs of the Hearing Board including the cost of any legal fees of the Hearing Board.

a. The WASC Board of Directors shall establish a differential deposit, depending upon whether the institution chooses to be represented by counsel in the conduct of the hearing. At the time it makes its appeal the institution shall declare whether or not it wishes to have an attorney conduct its portion of the hearing and represent it before the Hearing Board.

b. An institution making an appeal shall deposit at the time it files its appeal an amount to be established annually by the WASC Board of Directors [ten thousand dollars ($10,000)] with the Secretary-Treasurer of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges if the institution wishes to conduct the hearing without the use of an attorney to represent it. If the institution wishes to have an attorney conduct its portion of the hearing and represent it before the Hearing Board the deposit shall be twenty five thousand dollars ($25,000).

c. In the event the necessary costs exceed the amount of the deposit, the institution shall be responsible for the balance or, in the event the deposit exceeds the necessary costs, the institution shall receive a refund in the amount of the difference.

Section 3. If an institution, after availing itself of any review or appeal procedures of its appropriate Commission, still believes itself aggrieved by that Commission's denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, its governing board may appeal such action within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of notice thereof to the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges through the appropriate Commission's Executive Director. During the period up to and including the appeal, the institution's status with the Commission shall remain the same as it was prior to the decision being appealed.

a. The President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges shall then arrange a hearing at the earliest practicable date for the representatives of the institution before the Association's Hearing Board, established for this purpose as prescribed in Article VI, Section I, of this Constitution.

b. This hearing shall be informal and conducted under rules and procedures established by the WASC Board of Directors. Those testifying shall not be placed under oath. Legal counsel may be present as advisors but they shall not conduct the case unless the institution has filed a declaration at the time it filed its appeal, as provided in Article VI, Section 2, of this Constitution.

c. At least forty five (45) calendar days before the time set for the hearing of such an appeal, the President (or Secretary-Treasurer) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges shall cause notice of the time and place of the hearing to be mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the chairman or president of the governing board of the institution with a copy to the chief executive. Proof of notice shall be made at the hearing.

d. Subject to limitations set forth below, representatives of the institution shall have an opportunity to present written documents, other evidence on the institution's behalf, oral testimony, and arguments. Representatives of the appropriate Commission and of the evaluation team shall have a similar opportunity to present evidence, oral testimony, and arguments on the Commission's behalf. Neither party shall have the right to subpoena or to call any witnesses from the other party.

e. The Hearing Board, in addition to considering evidence adduced at the hearing, will also consider the institution's self study report, the evaluation team report, and all other material relied upon by the Commission in reaching the decision which is being appealed, including the reports filed as a result of any internal Commission appeal process.

f. The appeal shall be based on one or more of the following grounds: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (3) the evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when it made the decision which is being appealed was materially in error; or (4) the decision of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence.

g. No more than thirty (30) calendar days after the institution has submitted its request for an appeal to the President of WASC through the Secretary-Treasurer, the institution shall, in addition, file an appeal brief which shall set forth with greater specificity the grounds and the facts upon which the appeal is based. Such appeal brief shall follow the format specified in the appeals manual.

h. The appeal shall be heard on the record and confined to actions taken by the institution and the Commission up to and through the date of the Commission decision which is being appealed. Only information and

material before the Commission up to and through the date of the Commission's decision that is being appealed may be introduced, including that which was reviewed as part of the Commission's internal appeal process.

i. The Hearing Board shall make its decision by a vote of the majority on the basis of the admissible evidence and arguments presented to it at the hearing.

(1) If the Board finds for the institution on one or more of grounds (1) through (3) of Section 2f above, the Board shall remand the case to the appropriate Commission for reconsideration.

(2) If the Board finds for an institution on ground (4) of Section 2f above, it shall either remand the case to the appropriate Commission for reconsideration or, in the appropriate instance, grant the appeal and direct the Commission to take action which will effectuate the decision at its next meeting.

(3) If it finds against the institution on any of the four grounds in Section 2f above, it shall deny that portion of the appeal which is based on that ground.

(4) If the Board orders reconsideration, the appropriate Commission shall reconsider the matter according to procedures it may adopt for this purpose. The Commission's decision following such reconsideration shall be final.

j. At the conclusion of its deliberations, the Hearing Board shall issue its decision and the reasons therefor within forty-five (45) calendar days and inform, by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the chairman of the governing board of the institution, and the Executive Director of the Commission concerned. Such decision shall be final.

ARTICLE VII. Financing

Financial support for the work of the Board of Directors of the Association shall be obtained by equal assessment on each of the three Accrediting Commissions.

ARTICLE VIII. Amendments

Proposed amendments to this Constitution may originate with any of the Commissions or with the Board of Directors. Such proposed amendments, except those relating to the size and composition of a Commission (See ARTICLE III, section 4), shall become effective upon approval by a two-thirds vote of each of the three commissions and of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IX. Indemnification

The Association does hereby grant indemnification to any officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, or former officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, including but not limited to WASC employees and team members, for claims or actions asserted against said person arising out of acts or omissions alleged to have occurred in connection with, or as a result of his or her activities as an officer, director, commissioner, or agent, of this Association, to the fullest extent permitted by law; provided, however, as follows:

a. If any claim or action is asserted or threatened to be asserted, as described in such statutes, the person requesting indemnification must give timely notice thereof to the President of the Association or the Chairperson of the Board of Directors;

b. If the person requesting indemnification is not successful on the merits of the action, the Board of Directors, the members, or the court must determine that the person acted in good faith, in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in the best interests of the corporation, and without reason to believe his or her conduct was unlawful; and

c. Indemnification shall be provided herein only to the extent that valid and collectible insurance coverage under all existing policies of insurance held by the Association has been exhausted.